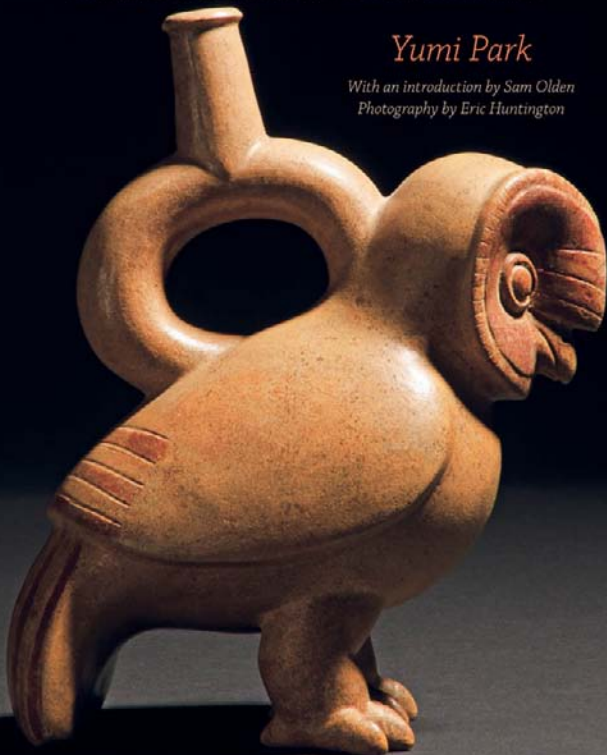


Mirrors of Clay

REFLECTIONS OF ANCIENT ANDEAN LIFE IN
CERAMICS FROM THE SAM OLDEN COLLECTION

Yumi Park

*With an introduction by Sam Olden
Photography by Eric Huntington*



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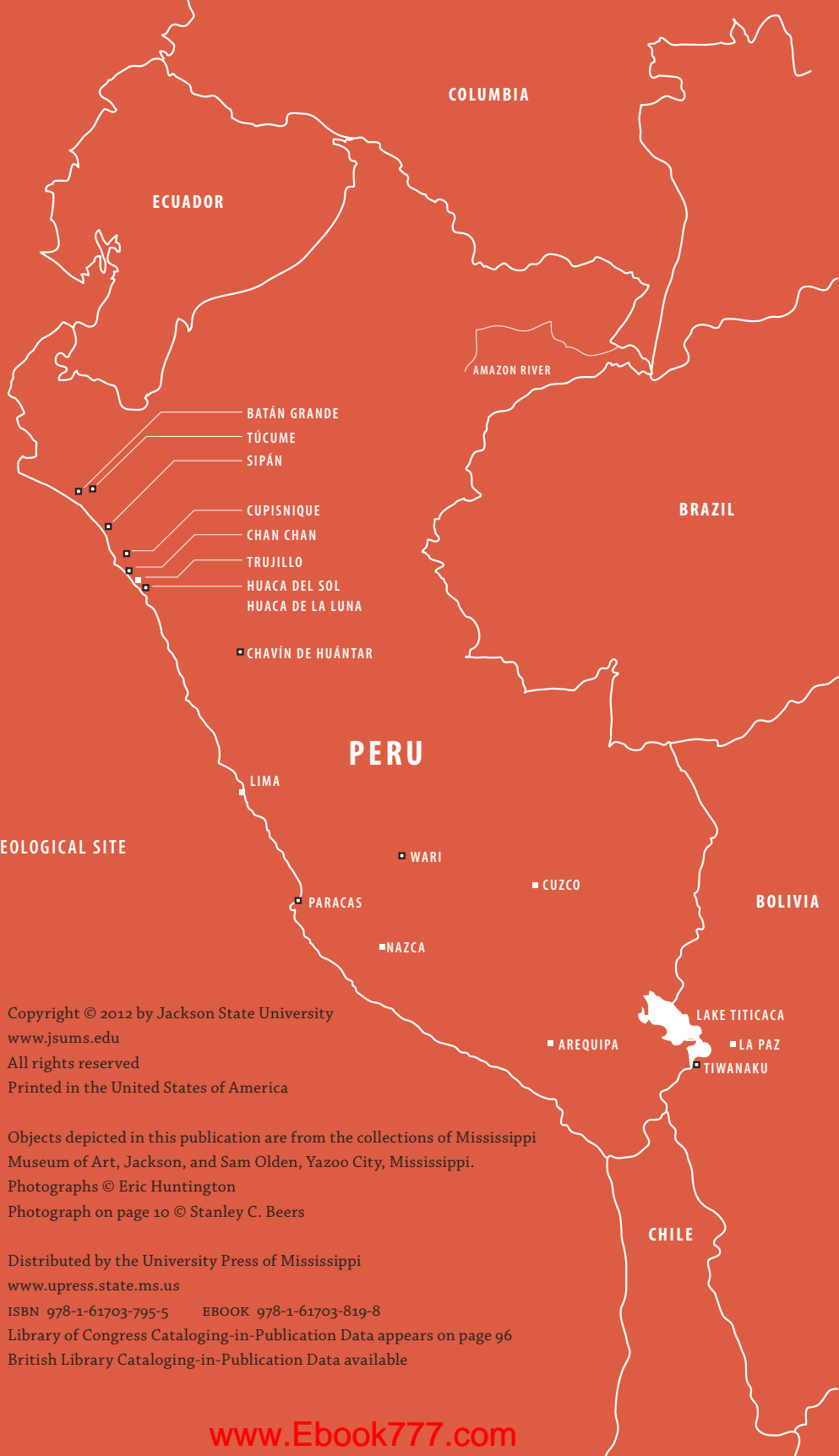
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Jackson State University
Mississippi Museum of Art



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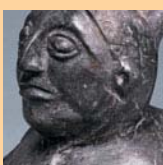
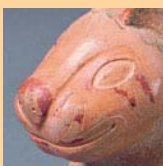
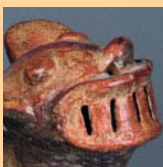
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Foreword

Wonder is evoked when we look at the pre-Columbian ceramic vessels that Sam Olden has generously donated and loaned to the Mississippi Museum of Art. This catalogue accompanies the exhibition *Mirrors of Clay: Reflections of Ancient Andean Life in Ceramics from The Sam Olden Collection* at Jackson State University in the Fall of 2012, and it imparts Dr. Yumi Park's valuable research on the ancient Andean cultures that created and used the vessels. Sam Olden lovingly collected these objects and skillfully cared for them until he made the generous gifts and loans to the Museum. His discerning eye and informed decisions have resulted in a collection of vessels rare in their quality and compelling in their stories.

Rather than dispelling an initial sense of wonder, our knowing more about the objects increases our curiosity and admiration for the artisans and the cultures from which they originate. Connecting us to the people who lived more than sixteen centuries ago in what is now Peru and its neighboring countries, Bolivia and Ecuador, the vessels featured in this catalogue tell us about the activities, physical environment, and belief systems of the region's ancient civilizations. Many of the objects are shaped like or depict animals that would have held symbolic meaning for humans. The vessels represent a relationship between gods, humans, and nature that permeated daily life.

With this exhibition and catalogue, more Mississippians may delight in these exquisitely preserved objects. We are grateful to Sam Olden, to Jackson State University, particularly to Dr. Yumi Park, and to University Press of Mississippi for this exhibition and catalogue, both of which will invite a broader audience to wonder and to learn about the pre-Columbian cultures of the Andean region.

Betsy Bradley
Director
Mississippi Museum of Art

Beth Batton
Curator of the Collection
Mississippi Museum of Art

Acknowledgments

Writing and researching an exhibition catalogue could not be completed without help from a large group of people. My deep gratitude and appreciation go first and foremost to Mr. Sam Olden, who passionately collected intriguing Pre-Columbian ceramics and enthusiastically pursued opportunities to share his collection with the community. To Ms. Betsy Bradley, director of the Mississippi Museum of Art, and Ms. Beth Batton, curator of the collection at the Mississippi Museum of Art, I offer my profound gratitude for their support and permission to organize this exhibition, *Mirrors of Clay*. Many thanks are also due to Dr. Carolyn W. Meyers, president of Jackson State University, for her aid to the exhibition and installation. I would like to specially thank Dr. Dollye M.E. Robinson, whose long support of and love for the Department of Art at Jackson State University made this exhibition catalogue possible. I also wish to express my thanks to the various faculty and staff members at JSU who helped prepare this exhibition and catalogue, especially Mr. David Hoard, who provided financial support through the JSU development foundation, Dr. Thomas Calhoun, who encouraged me to write an exhibition catalogue, Dr. Robert Blaine and Prof. Hyun-chung Kim, who support the Department of Art, Prof. Charles Carraway, whose caring made this exhibition catalogue complete, Prof. Mark Geil, who allowed me to use his photographic equipment, Prof. Kenyatta Stewart, who designed the advertising, and the map on page 4, Ms. LaNeysa Harris, the gallery director of the exhibition space, and Gloria Mangum, who facilitated the production of this exhibition. There are many others to thank on the fabulous staffs of the Mississippi Museum of Art and the University Press of Mississippi for the production of this exhibition catalogue, beginning with the wise and reasonable Leila Salisbury, director of the University Press of Mississippi. Also thanks to diligent Amber Schneider, registrar at the Mississippi Museum of Art. Thorough and patient editor Valerie Jones at the University Press of Mississippi ensured the catalogue's high quality. I am profoundly grateful to John Langston, the art director of the University Press of Mississippi, who designed the exhibition catalogue beautifully and helped shepherd it through the publication process. I am especially thankful to Eric Huntington, who wonderfully captured the vivacious and animated spirit of ancient Andean ceramics in his photos. Without his amazing images of the Sam Olden collection, this exhibition catalogue could not have been completed.



Introduction by Sam Olden

When in 1966 my employer, the then Mobil Oil Corporation (now ExxonMobil), transferred me after three years as general manager of its affiliate in Algeria, to become general manager of its two affiliates in Peru, I was not heading to an unfamiliar part of the world. In 1941, immediately after receiving my master's degree at the University of Mississippi, I had joined the American Foreign Service and was soon sent to Ecuador, Peru's northern neighbor. There I had served two years as a vice consul in our embassy in Quito.

The two Andean countries have similar geographical, ecological, and climatic features as well as inhabitants, and indeed have always shared a common regional history until separated into two new states after independence from Spain in the early 1800s. So I easily adapted to my new country and my headquarters in Lima, though much larger, busier, and more cosmopolitan than the quiet Quito of two decades before. I was especially impressed and happy to learn of the archaeological museums and splendid private collections of colonial art there, often opened to the public. History and art always were, and still are, of profound interest to me.

Before museum visits, however, my first duty was a rapid tour of this very large land to meet my agents in the principal cities. It was in Trujillo in the North, in the home of my agent there, that upon entering I saw—purely as casual decorative ornaments—my very first pre-Inca ceramic vessels and figures. Called *huacos* by everybody, they frankly stunned me with their curious designs, strange and graceful molding, the beauty of the clay, and their absolute uniqueness as an art form I had never before seen. I was told that local native farmers had been finding and selling them in town for years.

Seeing my fascination and deep interest in his pieces, the next day my agent kindly arranged with his friend Guillermo Ganoza to see his extensive collection of *huacos* before I continued my trip. There I was awestruck by a thrilling array of magnificent objects filling an entire room that I shall never forget. That experience left me with an admiration and appreciation for these wonderful artifacts that has lasted the rest of my life. That morning also I for the first time was made aware that Peru had seen several other impressive civilizations long before the Inca.

During my three more years in Peru, I devoted much of my free time to studying other *huaco* collections, beginning with Lima's National Archeology Museum and the truly amazing, privately owned Larco Herrera Museum with hundreds more objects. I saw smaller private collections in Lima too, as well as in small museums and in homes elsewhere as I frequently traveled about the country.

I also read all the history I could find locally about the ancient cultures that had created the *huacos*. Almost fifty years ago it was still quite meager, and extensive subsequent research has given us much more information today. But I was



Sam Olden circa 1966

entranced to learn what I could about those distinctive civilizations, the earliest beginning around 1600 BCE, which had successively arisen, fallen, and been forgotten until German archaeologist Max Uhle, supported by the University Museum in Philadelphia, and American philanthropist William Randolph Hearst, began to bring them again to light a little more than one hundred years ago.

The result of those experiences in Peru long past is the small collection of pre-Inca ceramics I almost lovingly began to put together for myself. I hope the objects chosen from it for this special exhibit at Jackson State University will interest you as well.

Early Andean Cultures: Ceramic Traditions

The Andean region of western South America contains diverse and dramatic natural environments that deeply affected the ancient cultures and peoples who lived there. The southern Pacific Ocean brought nutritious seafood and prosperity to early Andean societies, while inland from the western coast, an arid desert challenged the local inhabitants. That challenge eventually led the Andean peoples to develop a remarkable skill in agricultural irrigation using rivers and underground water sources, which allowed the coastal peoples to flourish even in the desert. The magnificent Andean mountain ranges, themselves, are desolate and cold, but the Andean highlands provided the perfect temperature for several hundred different types of potatoes, as well as for the San Pedro cactus used in shamanic transformations. In the areas of modern Ecuador and Peru farther to the east, frequent rain and high temperatures created dense Amazonian rain forests filled with exotic birds, ferocious animals, venomous snakes, primates, and thousands of types of plants. These flora and fauna became cultural foundations for the religious ideologies of the Andean peoples. Vividly colored feathers from exquisite rain forest birds were used for decorating the ritual ponchos of Inca kings. Vicious jaguars and dangerous snakes played key roles in ancient religious symbolism. The indigenous peoples also used specific plants and trees for medicine and healing. In these ways and more, the many unique environments of the Andean regions supported and challenged local cultures, providing them with food, resources, and the symbolic vocabulary for their culture. In addition, these cultural foundations also enabled the development of sophisticated artistic traditions, including the glossy black of Cupisnique and Chavin ceramics, the elaborate and vividly colorful paintings of Nazca ceramics, the naturalistic images of fauna, flora, and daily activities found on Moche ceramics, and the depiction of the mythical hero commonly displayed on Lambayeque ceramics.

The artistic images and designs of each Andean group living in different ecological zones were closely related to the unique cultural foundations and socio-political systems of the local people. Scholars such as Rebecca Stone-Miller argue that the artistic creations of all the Andean peoples taken as a whole represent a singular Andean worldview that includes a common set of beliefs about the universe and the place of humans therein.¹ This worldview is rooted in Andean religious ideology and is crucial for contextualizing the diverse materials, forms, designs, and symbolisms of the various ancient Andean artifacts. Scholars describe the Andean worldview in terms of concepts like appropriation, dualism, and mediation.

The term “appropriation” refers to an artist’s adoption of a particular form or image from a previous or neighboring culture in order to create a new object. Artists are frequently inspired by existing objects, and so appropriation is a fairly com-

mon practice. Ironically, the completed process of appropriation often leads to new, unique artistic styles that represent different cultures in novel ways. Appropriated forms and images can easily take on new meanings and become a standard style that represents the very separation of the appropriating culture from its predecessors. Andean societies from different time periods tended to be quite distinctive in their artistic styles, which were usually developed through processes including adoption and adaptation. Such processes can be seen at work in the development of the stirrup-spouted form of Cupisnique ceramics, which was adapted from the simple handle spout shape of the early Ecuadorean Chorrera style (1800–300 BCE). This stirrup-spouted form was repeatedly appropriated by artists of subsequent cultures, including the Moche (50–800 CE) and Chimú (1100–1550 CE), both of which flourished on the northern coast of Peru and created their own ceramic spout forms. Another important example of appropriation is the fanged motif first developed by Cupisnique and Chavín craftsmen. Depictions of fangs were later used by artists from other cultures to create the diverse forms of supernatural deities and shamanic images that are found throughout ancient Andean ceramics. When forms such as the stirrup spout and motifs such as fangs were appropriated into these different settings, iconographies and symbolism were dynamically altered in idiosyncratic ways to define the uniqueness of each culture's style and characteristics.

Another fundamental concept in the religious ideology of Andean society is dualism. This involves the belief that pairs of opposite forces unite to shape and balance the cosmos and microcosm. Dualistic opposites are paired in terms of color (white and black), life (birth and death), gender (female and male), the universe (upper and lower), day (daylight and night), and the sky (moon and sun). One consequence of the balance between life and death, in particular, is the belief that death is not a permanent end to life—the Andean people saw death as simply another journey towards a new form of life. Similarly, day and night were not considered separate states, but two parts of a whole that balanced and shaped the entire day, and even the whole year.

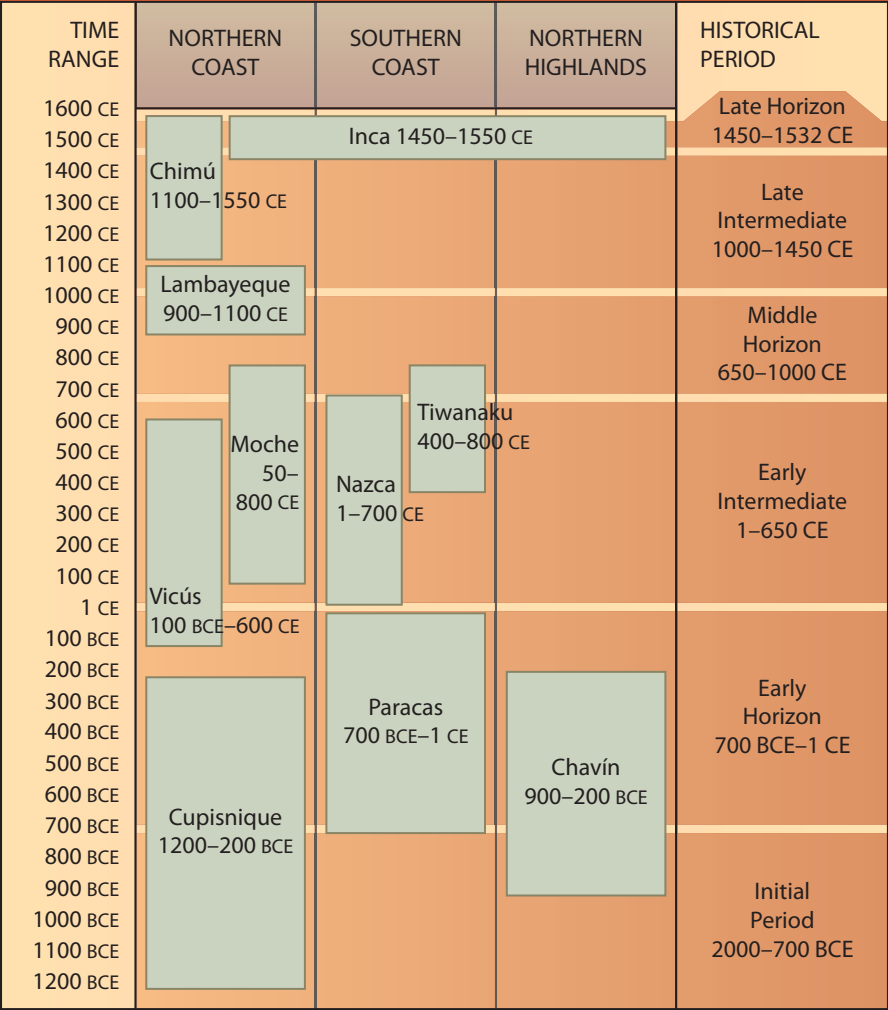
Expressions of these dualistic pairs are pervasive in ancient Andean artifacts and temple architecture. The site of Chavín de Huántar illustrates Andean dualism dramatically through the pairing of opposites at the main portal of the New Temple. This doorway is constructed from two posts of black stone and a lintel that is white, expressing a dualistic symbolism. The Chavín de Huántar site, which was constructed between approximately 900 and 200 BCE, is considered the birthplace of Chavín culture and also a foundational ceremonial site for early Andean cultures in general. Other examples of dualistic pairs are ubiquitous in Cupisnique and Moche ceramics. The stirrup-spouted form of Cupisnique ceramics may also convey a dualistic idea—the two paths of liquid through the round-shaped stirrup handle represent paired opposites that are united when liquid is poured out of the single opening. The action of pouring liquid from a stirrup-spouted vessel could be considered a rite that unified two opposite elements, maintaining balance between the cosmic and microcosmic worlds. Moreover, the paired fruit depicted in many Moche ceramics can be understood as another depiction of the dualistic paradigm that is the foundation of ancient Andean religious ideology.

Mediation is another concept that is fundamental to the Andean peoples' world-

view and can be found in all Andean regions. The aforementioned site of Chavín de Huántar, as an important ceremonial temple, probably played a mediating role in bringing balance to the microcosm where the Andean people lived. More generally, mediation is often presented through the imagery of shamans, one of the more popular subjects depicted on ancient Andean artifacts, including many ceramics. Typically, shamans are depicted as transformed humans, where the human face is replaced with jaguar or avian forms. These images represent the guidance of a shaman by spirit animals that helped him communicate properly with the supernatural world. With guidance from his spirit companion, the shaman was able to bring peace, prosperity, fecundity, and wealth into the human world. The shaman thus served as a mediator between the earth and the supernatural world—since the cosmos and microcosm were seen as dynamic and changeable, constant mediation was necessary to keep balance in the unstable universe.

Ancient Andean ceramics also played an important connective role between the earthly realm and underworld. They were often used as burial offerings for the deceased and are generally known today through excavations of burial sites that contain human remains. Since these objects were extremely valuable and contained important motifs of supernatural deities, daily-life themes, fruits, flora, fauna, and naturalistic portraits, these ceramics comforted the spirits of the deceased on their way to the underworld. In addition to their funerary role, ceramic objects can also be understood as animated materials that metamorphose from moist, wet clay to hard, waterproof containers. Because of this transformation, ancient Andeans may have believed that ceramics exhibited an animistic power that mediated between the mundane world and underworld, eventually leading these worlds into a balanced unity. This idea of mediation and balance lies at the core of the Andean worldview, and is reflected clearly in the shapes and images of ancient Andean ceramics.

¹ Stone-Miller 2002, 14.



This chart was adapted from *The Spirit of Ancient Peru*, 1997.

CUPISNIQUE CULTURE

(1200–200 BCE)

The application of the term “Cupisnique” to a culture and an artistic style first came into use after Rafael Larco Hoyle, a well-known Peruvian researcher, excavated the Cupisnique ravine located between the Jequetepeque and Chicama valleys of northern Peru. He proposed that the Cupisnique name could be applied both to the unique style of ceramics found there and the people that created those artifacts. This Cupisnique culture flourished between approximately 1200 and 200 BCE. Stirrup-spouted Cupisnique ceramic vessels are commonly found at burial sites along with human remains. The Cupisnique ceramic style is distinctive and characterized by four major features: a particular combination of stirrup-spouts, dark black or brown hues, engraved head motifs, and extremely well-polished surfaces.

This style of engraved, stirrup-spouted ceramics is common to all inhabitants of the Cupisnique region, who established a different style than other local variations in such places as Tembladera, Chongoyape, and Santa Ana. Cupisnique ceramics portray images of anthropomorphic gods, decapitated heads, and flora and fauna of the natural environment. This selection of subjects reveals that the Cupisnique people appreciated the value of their everyday lives and embraced a profoundly complex religious ideology.



Elderly Seated Shaman

Northern Coast, Cupisnique

23.3 x 13.9 x 13.6 cm

Late Initial Period

Collection of Mississippi Museum of Art

1200–200 BCE

Gift of Sam Olden

Ceramic

1996.090

This stirrup-spouted vessel depicts a hunched man with crossed legs. The figure's back is connected to a slightly opened stirrup-spout typical of the Cupisnique style popularly used during the Late Initial Period (1200–200 BCE). The man has an unusual face covered with wrinkles or scarification. Although the lines on his face seem to indicate his age, his large, sharp eyes suggest that he has an acute mind and great wisdom. The bulbous nose is juxtaposed with large ears, to which large circular earpools are attached. The figure also holds an object in each hand—in his right hand, a pestle, and in his left hand, a mortar. These tools were historically used to grind certain mushrooms and the San Pedro cactus plant into powders that were used as hallucinogens in rituals practiced by shamans, and the figure's possession of these objects suggest his identity as a shaman.

A shaman is a type of religious practitioner that was particularly important during the ancient Andean period. The shaman, who performs most of the rituals of the culture, possesses the unique ability to connect with the supernatural world using magico-sacred power. Michael Harner defined a shaman as “a person who journeys to the spirits,” and Glenne H. Shepard, Jr. noted that “healing is a key function performed by Central and South American shamans.”² The abilities of a shaman often include performing supernatural feats, curing sickness, and traveling from the human realm to the animal or spirit realms. These powers are frequently attributed to the hallucinogenic effects of mushrooms and the San Pedro cactus, which allow the practitioner to contact the spirit world. The importance of the mortar and pestle in grinding these fungi and plants into efficacious powders make them symbols of his status and clearly indicate that this ceramic figure depicts a shaman.

² Harner 1988, 8, and Shepard, Jr. 2004, 386.



Achira Root

Northern Coast, Cupisnique
Late Initial Period
1200–200 BCE
Ceramic

20.7 x 31.2 x 14.1 cm
Collection of Mississippi Museum of Art
Gift of Sam Olden
1996.091

This stirrup-spouted vessel is associated with the Peruvian daily diet. Ancient Peruvians displayed a propensity to depict their primary food sources in ceramic form. The bubble-shaped body of this vessel probably indicates the *achira* root, which was a dietary staple. The *achira* root form is perfectly balanced, and the stirrup-spout is beautifully connected to the root-shaped body. Long and short lines engraved on the surface illustrate the rugged and uneven texture of the *achira* root. In depicting a naturalistic image of their main food resources, the Cupisnique people were probably also interested in creating a record of them for the purposes of documentation and education. The slightly opened spout is considered one of the most important characteristics of Cupisnique ceramics developed during the Late Initial Period.

CHAVÍN CULTURE

(900–200 BCE)

Chavín culture has been called the first great pan-Andean civilization of the ancient Americas. The name “Chavín,” which is applied both to an ancient culture and the particular artistic style of their artifacts, comes from the archaeological site of Chavín de Huántar, where objects in this style were first excavated by Julio Tello in 1919. In fact, the Chavín’s sophisticated artistic style was adopted and reused by many subsequent Andean cultures, supporting Tello’s argument that Chavín culture strongly influenced the entire Andean region from the coast to the tropical rain forest. The site of Chavín de Huántar is one of the most sophisticated Andean ritual sites known today, and its distinctive stone structures decorated with elaborate feline and anthropomorphic deity motifs represent a much higher cultural achievement than other archaeological sites constructed in the first millennium using only adobe bricks. Chavín potters used similar artistic themes and motifs to those found on the incredible stone carvings of Chavín de Huántar for their ceramic vessels, which are characterized by well-burnished black surfaces decorated with anthropomorphic deities and composite animals. The forms of ceramics excavated at Chavín de Huántar are varied, including long straight-neck bottles, stirrup-spouted vessels, and simple round bowls. These items have an extremely high quality of surface treatment and level of decorative design. Based on the fact that these variously shaped ceramics were excavated from a section of the site used particularly for offerings, one can assume that these elaborately decorated ceramics were used for religious ceremonies.



Feline Head

Northern Highlands, Chavín-oid	28.5 x 21.1 x 19.5 cm
Early Horizon Period	Collection of Mississippi Museum of Art
700 BCE–1 CE	Gift of Sam Olden
Ceramic	1990.119

This orange, stirrup-spouted ceramic vessel depicts a feline. The oval-shaped ceramic body was probably created using a simple technique of coiling loops of clay on top of each other to form the shape of a vessel. After creating the basic shape, a potter smooths the coil ridges on the inside and outside surfaces. The smoothed surface becomes a perfect canvas to express any subject matter. In this particular ceramic, the potter formed an oval-shaped body in order to incise a feline head image. The large, leaf-shaped eyes are accentuated with several concentric lines, and large, half-circular pupils peek out from below the eyelids. On the forehead, several curved lines may suggest the wrinkles that appear when the feline vocalizes. Two small holes indicate its bulbous nose. The small, half-circular ears stick out from the vessel's sides. The open mouth shows evenly lined teeth with four sharp fangs protruding from the upper and lower gums, while the circular shape of the corners of the mouth indicates that this creature is snarling.

The most important characteristic on this vessel is this snarling mouth with fanged teeth, which implies a strong influence of the Chavín artistic style. Although the origin and excavation site of this vessel are unknown, the snarling feline mouth visually reveals that it comes from a region strongly influenced by the Chavín. At the site of Chavín de Huántar, many stone façades and carved stone sculptures are decorated with images of anthropomorphic deities whose main attributes are feline, an emblem of the Chavín style. Depictions of snarling, fanged mouths spread widely throughout the Andean territories during the Early Horizon Period (700 BCE–1 CE).

Large felines, including jaguars, embodied important symbolism in the Chavín religious system. As the largest and most fearful animal in South America, the jaguar serves as a natural symbol of power and strength. In general, felines represented the power of the earthly realm and were associated with the transformation of shamans and priests for the sake of physical power. Therefore, it is only natural that feline traits were used to depict the powerful anthropomorphic deities that decorate the main ritual temple at Chavín de Huántar.

VICÚS CULTURE

(100 BCE–600 CE)

“Vicús” is the name for the distinctive pottery style mostly excavated from Piura located on the extreme northern coast of Peru. Although the Vicús culture or cultural sites are not well-known or well-researched, the Vicús ceramic style has been well-studied. Because the Vicús culture was located between the northern coast of Peru and the border with Ecuador, Vicús ceramics show an eclectic style influenced by local variants of the Chorrera culture (ca. 1800–300 BCE), the Bahia culture (ca. 500 BCE–500 CE) that developed in coastal Ecuador, and the Gallinazo culture (Virú, ca. 1–100 CE) that flourished in the Virú Valley in Peru. One notable characteristic of Vicús ceramics is the depiction of elongated, slanted eyes, called “coffee bean” eyes, a style which originated either from the Bahia or Gallinazo style. Other Vicús characteristics that are also similar to the Gallinazo style include strap handles, prominent aquiline noses on figures, and the technique of negative decoration. Because of shared characteristics like negative decoration and the aquiline nose, it is often hard to distinguish the Vicús style from the Gallinazo. Negative decoration, in particular, is a distinctive characteristic of both Vicús and Gallinazo ceramics. This technique involves applying lines and patterns of organic matter to the surface of a ceramic vessels before its firing. When heated, the surface becomes charred with soot except in the areas masked by the organic matter. After firing, the organic matter is removed, revealing a “negative” image of intricate designs and motifs. Negative decoration is only possible under a low temperature in a pit-hole kiln. Luis Jaime Castillo Butters, a Peruvian archaeologist, mentioned that ceramics decorated with this negative painting technique were created for the social elite and were quite different from the ceramics used by ordinary people.³

Vicús ceramics also capture diverse themes from the natural world,

including native flora and fauna, and everyday life images of warriors, musicians, and noblemen. The multiplicity of themes shows that Vicús potters were inspired by both the world of human activity and the natural world of which humans take advantage. Remarkably, Vicús potters did not only create tangible representations, but they also captured the intangible and ephemeral in the form of sounds inside their ceramic bottles. Vicús ceramics are well-known for double-chambered “whistling bottles” designed to create a whistling sound when liquid passes from one chamber to the other. When the liquid (probably *chicha*, a fermented corn liquid) was served to noblemen, liquid pressed on the air trapped inside the bottle and created a high-pitched whistle. Based on the fact that these whistling bottles were used as burial offerings and excavated at burial sites, it is possible to make a connection between this whistling sound and the journey of death. Perhaps this alluring sound was associated with the funerary tradition, aiding the deceased in finding the proper way to the underworld.

³ Castillo Butters 2009, 223.



Seated Female

Northern Coast, Vicús
Early Intermediate Period
100 BCE–600 CE
Ceramic

23.5 x 14.2 x 22.1 cm
Collection of Mississippi Museum of Art
Gift of Sam Olden
1990.118

This ceramic depicts a seated female with crossed legs. The body of this orange-colored ceramic vessel was probably formed in a press mold, and specific body ornaments were added to convey gender and social status. The round face bears the type of androgynous human features found on Vicús ceramics. The bean-shaped eyes emphasized with bold outlines and the aquiline nose are other typical attributes of Vicús vessels. Although the seated position with crossed legs and the position of the arms on the lap suggest a sense of masculinity, two protuberant dots on the chest and a flat genital area clearly identify the gender of this figure as female. She wears a three-horned headdress and a type of large, circular ear ornament typically made out of silver, gold, or copper alloy. Even though not much research has been done on the role of females in Vicús culture, it is clear that some females were permitted to wear privileged items such as this crown-like headdress and these lavish ear ornaments.



Jaguar

Northern Coast, Vicús
Early Intermediate Period
100 BCE–600 CE
Ceramic

22.5 x 10.6 x 21.7 cm
Collection of Mississippi Museum of Art
Gift of Sam Olden
1991.413

This dark-brown-colored ceramic with a bridge handle is in the form of a jaguar. The distinctive polka-dot markings, created with the negative painting technique, suggest generic jaguar pelage patterns. The protuberant eyes, round ears, bulbous nose, and snarling mouth with sharp fangs also indicate that this feline form is specifically a jaguar. Although this bottle has a spout to pour liquid out of the chamber, small holes also exist in the jaguar's mouth. These holes are not meant to release liquid but to create a charming whistling sound. Located on opposite ends of the bottle, the jaguar's head and the spout create two chambers for air to move between. When a person pours liquid from this bottle, air is emitted from the jaguar's mouth and a whistling sound is created.

The relationship between the whistling sound and the jaguar image is enigmatic. Felines often make sounds from their throat—in particular, jaguars often snarl when they are threatened or trying to threaten others. Vicús potters may have made this jaguar vessel into a whistle in mimicry of the real jaguar's vocalizations. Although the whistling sound from the vessel is not like the real sound of a jaguar, the whistling action animates this object with a spirit that can be considered reminiscent of a true jaguar. Because of its ability to make a dynamic sound, this ceramic vessel is no longer simply a static, utilitarian object. It epitomizes the spirit of a living being in a way that reveals some of the religious theology and natural symbolism of the Vicús people.



Feline

Northern Coast, Vicús
Early Intermediate Period
100 BCE–600 CE
Ceramic

23.8 x 11.8 x 19.5 cm
Collection of Mississippi Museum of Art
Gift of Sam Olden
1992.001

This orange-colored Vicús ceramic vessel is similar to the jaguar ceramic vessel mentioned previously in terms of its shape, decoration, size, and facial features, but it does not exhibit the jaguar pelage motif. Both vessels are also capable of emitting a whistling sound. Based on these similarities, it is possible to see the immense popularity of this style in Vicús culture. Since this feline ceramic vessel does not exhibit the distinctive polka-dot pattern of a jaguar, however, it can be considered simply a depiction of a feline.



Seated Figure Wearing a Nose Ornament

Northern Coast, Vicús
Early Intermediate Period
100 BCE–600 CE
Ceramic

20.8 x 11.5 x 25.9 cm
Collection of Mississippi Museum of Art
Gift of Sam Olden
1992.002

This double-chambered whistling bottle depicts a seated man wearing a huge oval-shaped nose ornament. The figure sits with bent legs and hands on his knees. His hands and feet are delineated with low relief, and his arms and legs are outlined with white clay slip. His head is quite small compared to his large, oval-shaped body. The back of his head contains twelve small holes for emitting a clear whistle. The figure's facial features are typical of Vicús ceramics: elongated, slanted eyes (in this case pierced with small holes, perhaps to indicate pupils) and an aquiline nose. The large, half-moon-shaped nose ornament covers his entire mouth and almost half of his face. Such ornaments were probably made out of valuable metals such as silver, gold, or copper alloy, all of which can reflect sun and appear luminous. Because of the value of such large, metal nose ornaments, one can assume that this figure might be a nobleman or priest. Further details and motifs on this vessel are difficult to detect because the surface decoration is quite faded. Only a lattice pattern painted with negative decoration is slightly visible. The use of the negative painting technique may indicate that this whistling ceramic vessel was meant for a wealthy nobleman.

NAZCA CULTURE

(1 CE–700 CE)

The Nazca culture flourished approximately between 1 CE and 700 CE in the Ica and Nazca Valleys of southern coastal Peru. In arid and demanding environments, Nazca people relied heavily on agriculture and built a formidable irrigation system using rivers and underground water resources. Many of the Nazca's defining artistic styles originated directly out of earlier Paracas works, which were created approximately between 700 BCE and 1 CE. During the time that the Nazca thrived on the southern coast of Peru, the Moche culture developed a centralized government on the northern coast, but the Nazca did not have a unitary government—they were organized under a series of chiefdoms and unified by common cultural, social, and religious practices.

The Nazca were famous for exquisite textile products created from cotton and wool, for dazzling body paraphernalia constructed out of imported *spondylus* shells, precious stones, and gold, and for vividly colored garments made out of exotic bird feathers. Above all, the Nazca culture is best known for its polychrome painted ceramic vessels, which present an amazing assortment of naturalistic, religious, and daily-life motifs. Those paintings and decorative designs are the primary source for our understanding of the cultural roles, social systems, and religious practices of the Nazca people.

In order to create a smooth, silky surface on ceramic vessels, Nazca potters learned a technique used by potters of previous cultural periods, including the Cupisnique and Paracas. By rubbing a smooth pebble on rough, unfinished earthenware, a glistening smoothness can be achieved. For additional decoration, the artists mixed various colored pigments with white clay slip (a liquid mixture of clay and water) to create polychrome paintings of amazing designs and images. They used every color available to them and accentuated the intricately detailed images with

black outlines. Regarding the form of their vessels, the Nazca adopted the double necks and bridge handles used in Paracas ceramics. In decorating these, the Nazca adapted Paracas textile designs and popular subjects such as the shaman, jaguar, serpent, and hummingbird. In addition, Nazca ceramic vessels often portray complex supernatural creatures composited from animal, human, and plant forms.

Today, the Nazca culture is perhaps most famous for the Nazca lines—gigantic engravings on the landscape of the arid desert. After the Nazca culture collapsed, they were forgotten for centuries, but because of the strikingly large size of these earthworks, the Nazca lines were rediscovered in the 1930s through aerial reconnaissance. The Nazca lines were created by removing a surface layer of dark-colored rocks on the dry desert face, revealing lighter-colored sand beneath. Using this technique, the Nazca delineated simple geometric shapes as well as figurative and naturalistic images. Despite their age, the Nazca lines survived over the centuries due to lack of rainfall or strong winds in the region.

Andean scholars have contentiously debated the enigmatic function of the Nazca lines since their discovery. Helaine Silverman suggests that the Nazca lines were used as ritual pathways leading to sacred sites.⁴ Gary Urton mentions that the Nazca lines were predecessors to the Ceque lines that were created during the Inca period in order to indicate an enactment of sacred social rites.⁵ Recently, our understanding of the function and purpose of the Nazca lines has been increased by Aveni's further excavations and research, which suggest that these lines could be related to a water-cult.⁶ Aveni believes that the ancient Nazca people had highly developed knowledge of geology, hydrology, and techniques to irrigate even in the desert. Moreover, David Johnson suggests that the Nazca lines might have functioned as markers for the locations of subterranean water sources.⁷ Although many different roles for the lines have been suggested in publication, the function of the Nazca lines remains mysterious and no entirely convincing explanation yet exists.

⁴ Silverman 1994, 13.

⁵ Urton 1990, 175.

⁶ Aveni 2000, 34–35.

⁷ Aveni 2000, 35



Fisherman on a Totora Reed Boat

Southern Coast, Nazca
Early Intermediate Period
1–700 CE
Ceramic

18.8 x 14.2 x 19.5 cm
Collection of Sam Olden
Courtesy of Mississippi Museum of Art
L0021.50

The fisherman is a common theme in Nazca iconography. He represents the daily life of the Nazca people. Although it might be considered a simple, ordinary livelihood, fishing was one of the most important activities in the life of the Nazca people. Fish and shellfish provided many nutrients and proteins, while seaweed offered dietary fiber and numerous vitamins. These beneficial food sources were greater than anything accessible nearby on land. The fact that many fisherman-themed ceramic vessels were excavated in the Nazca region supports the conclusion that fishing was important for the Nazca.

This fisherman vessel with a typical Nazca-style bridge-shaped spout presents a Nazca fisherman, fishing net, and *totora* reed boat. The forms of the fisherman and boat are visually delimited by the contrasting use of white clay slip (a thick, creamy suspension of clay particles or minerals in water) for the boat and red clay slip for the fisherman and spout. The male fisherman straddles the *totora* reed boat while apparently holding a fishnet and paddling, a posture depicting the dynamism of his life in Nazca society. The large fishnet he holds is of a type used for sweeping large areas to catch various types of fish. The oval body of this ceramic vessel is the same shape as a *totora* reed boat, a conveyance still popularly used in present-day coastal Peru. The four brown vertical stripes represent the ties that bundle the reeds into the shape of a boat. Even though the fishnet design covers the entire boat-shaped vessel, it seems logical to assume that the figure is riding on a *totora* reed boat and ready to catch fish with his net.



Trophy-Headed Anthropomorphic Figure

Southern Coast, Nazca
Early Intermediate Period
1–700 CE
Ceramic

15.3 x 10.5 x 10.4 cm
Collection of Mississippi Museum of Art
Gift of Sam Olden
1990.116

This vibrant multi-colored ceramic cup is divided vertically into four bands, each of which is decorated with a different theme: fish with half-oval-shaped eyes, trophy-headed anthropomorphic figures, a geometric step design, and another geometric step-fret design. The top band of the cup displays a row of fish each marked with a black line on their upper body and distinctive half-oval-shaped eye that gives a charming sense of personality. The fish are oriented alternately: one right side up and the next upside down. They are brightly and variously colored.

The central section of this cup (second band) is decorated with two almost identical trophy-headed anthropomorphic figures. A trophy head is the decapitated head of an enemy warrior, and it is usually depicted with a thick tongue protruding from the mouth. According to Donald Proulx, the heads of enemy warriors are generally depicted as decorated with a zigzag red stripe running across the cheek and down the nose.⁸ This trophy head wears a crown that is itself an anthropomorphic being. Although the crown is covered with thorny rays, it displays two eyes and an opened mouth as well as two legs. Because of the flowing sense of these legs attached to the thorny head, this figure seems to fly in the sky. The combination of a trophy head and an anthropomorphic entity shown on this cup is very rare.

The third and fourth bands are decorated with a step design and a step-fret design that has an additional bracket drawn at a right angle to the step motif. These two types of geometric patterns are usually painted with multiple color schemes in order to give a sense of vitality and variability.

⁸ Proulx 2006, 76.



Figure with Rhombus-Shaped Eyes

Southern Coast, Nazca
Early Intermediate Period
1–700 CE
Ceramic

15.6 x 14.1 x 14.3 cm
Collection of Mississippi Museum of Art
Gift of Sam Olden
1990.115

This ceramic cup is decorated with two almost identical figures on the central band and a geometric design on the top band. The diamond geometric design on the top band echoes the rhombus-shaped eyes of the being. The head and face of the being are covered in various thorny rays, while its mouth holds a protruding tongue. The head connects to legs that appear to be floating on water or flying in the sky. The elongated body of this creature gives a sense that the Nazca potter imbued it with the unique strength of the snake, a reptile that swims in the water and seems to fly when it jumps from one tree to another. Because this creature has two attached legs, it is considered to be anthropomorphic.



Trophy Head Taster

Southern Coast, Nazca
Early Intermediate Period
1–700 CE
Ceramic

14.7 x 11.8 x 11.7 cm
Collection of Sam Olden
Courtesy of Mississippi Museum of Art
L0025.50

This double-spouted ceramic vessel is painted with the anthropomorphic creature Donald Proulx calls the trophy head taster.⁹ This entity was painted on the top of the vessel, its head and arms on one side and its body and tail on the other. A series of double-headed serpents, colored with white, brown, black, and red, are painted on the lower register of the vessel.

The trophy head taster is so called because his protruding tongue extends to touch the trophy head below his face. The figure's stretched arms hold the trophy head against its tongue. This being wears a white facial mask that has two rays on each side, while an outstretched black wing connects to each side of the face. Because of these wings, this anthropomorphic figure might be interpreted as a shaman who transformed himself into a bird in order to deliver the trophy head as an offering to the supernatural world. By adopting avian characteristics, a shaman can transport himself from one realm to another as a bird flies between the realms of earth and sky. Because of his abilities, the shaman is considered to serve as a mediator between the mundane and supernatural worlds. The role of mediator is one of the most important obligations to a shaman, whose goal is to keep the cosmos in balance.

⁹ Proulx 2006, 68.



Black-Eyed Anthropomorphic Figure

Southern Coast, Nazca
Early Intermediate Period
1–700 CE
Ceramic

16.9 x 17.2 x 17.3 cm
Collection of Sam Olden
Courtesy of Mississippi Museum of Art
L0028.S0

This double-spouted ceramic vessel is painted on one side with the face of a black-eyed creature and on the other side with the face and elongated body of a second, black-eyed, anthropomorphic figure. The foreheads of these figures are decorated with fan-shaped headdresses covered with various thorny rays illuminating the faces. The fan-shaped headdress ornaments echo the black-painted eye masks, which vividly contrast with the brown mouth masks. These mouth masks are also decorated with radiating rays to enlarge the size of the faces and emphasize the elevated status of the supernatural beings. The smiling mouths are emphasized with a thick, red outline, and bifurcated tongues emerge from the lips divided into two colors, grey and brown. One hand holds four spears, which ancient Andeans considered powerful weapons. Warriors often used spears in combination with atlatls, or spear-throwing levers, which increased the range of the weapon dramatically.

Connected to the side of the anthropomorphic figure's face is an unidentified rectangle. On top of this shape lie three variously colored beans with "eyes" on each side and sprouts coming from their tops. It seems that the rectangular part, decorated with four intriguing knotting objects, is a representation of the earth that gives nutrients to sustain life. Beans have a particular importance for ancient Peruvian people—for three thousand years, beans were a main source of nutrition, being easily cultivated even in demanding natural conditions. Just as beans are associated with the fertile life desired by ancient Andean people, so the spears this mythical figure holds could be related to successful hunting as well as warfare. In this case, the anthropomorphic figure could be interpreted as a fertility deity.



Masked Figure with Serpents

Southern Coast, Nazca
Early Intermediate Period
1–700 CE
Ceramic

17.8 x 15.1 x 14.9 cm
Collection of Sam Olden
Courtesy of Mississippi Museum of Art
L0033.50

This double-spouted ceramic vessel is painted with an anthropomorphic figure accompanied by several serpents on its head and waist. He wears a gray-colored forehead ornament and a light-brown-colored mouth mask, which is decorated with feather-like ornaments on each side. His right hand grasps the hair of a trophy head whose lips are pinned with two thorns, symbolizing that the speaking ability of the deceased was permanently terminated by the decapitator. Spoken communication was considered a skill uniquely possessed by human beings. By forcefully terminating another's capability of speech, a decapitator controls and obtains the victim's special language ability.

Four serpents, sticking out their elongated tongues, emerge from the figure's forehead ornament. Two other large serpents are also attached in turn to the right and left armpits of this anthropomorphic being. One serpent has a zigzag motif and the other is decorated with a half-circular motif. These zigzag and half-circular designs are very similar to patterns found on actual boa constrictors in nature. Snakes symbolize many different roles in ancient Andean cultures because of their various natural attributes. For example, they shed regularly in order to remove dry and old skin. This characteristic is associated with the symbolism of regeneration and fertility. Additionally, most snakes can swim in the water, live under the earth, and jump from tree to tree. Because they can inhabit and traverse different realms, serpents gain symbolic significance in many ways, most often being associated with the fecundity of water and earth.

Double-Headed Anthropomorphic Figure with Serpentine Body

Southern Coast, Nazca
Early Intermediate Period
1–700 CE
Ceramic

18.7 x 14.7 x 15.2 cm
Collection of Sam Olden
Courtesy of Mississippi Museum of Art
L0032.S0

This double-spouted ceramic vessel depicts a double-headed anthropomorphic figure with an elongated serpentine body. The front head of this mythical being shows elaborate facial paraphernalia. Its forehead is decorated with a white-colored ornament, which clearly contrasts with its dark-red-colored face. It wears a light brown mouth mask decorated with feather-like ornaments on each side. Under its face, it is wearing a large red-colored necklace probably made out of *spondylus* shells, which are associated with human sacrifice rituals. Its right and left hands are holding trophy heads, fingers grasping the hair of the trophy heads. The figure's elongated, serpentine body is covered with various thorns; five are located on the upper section of its body and four are located on the lower section. A decapitated trophy head is displayed between each thorn. These thorns may be intended to represent the texture of snake scales. The fact that this double-headed anthropomorphic figure both holds trophy heads and is also decorated with trophy heads on its body suggests a strong relationship to ritual sacrifice.

Another head attached to the end of the serpentine body shows feline characteristics, such as bulging eyes, a bulbous nose, and paws. According to Donald Proulx, such depiction of feline features is probably based on the Pampas cat (*Felis colocolo*), a small feline found in coastal agricultural regions but not in Nazca.¹⁰ However, the image and symbolism of the feline could have been transferred from the Amazonian rain forest to the Nazca people in the Andean highlands via routes of trade. Items decorated with vividly colored bird feathers imported from the Amazonian rain forest have been excavated on the southern coast of the Nazca region. Because of this trade relationship and the importing/exporting of goods (such as the San Pedro cactus, potatoes, exotic rain forest birds, and fauna), the Nazca were interconnected with other cultures in the highlands of the Andes and the northern coast of Peru, including Amazonian rain forest ethnic groups.

¹⁰ Proulx 2006, 88.





Two Fish (Sharks?)

Southern Coast, Nazca
Early Intermediate Period
1–700 CE
Ceramic

4.4 x 17.3 x 17.4 cm
Collection of Mississippi Museum of Art
Gift of Sam Olden
1990.113

This ceramic bowl is painted with two fish defined with dark bodies and black outlines against a white background. The species of these animals is unclear; they may represent fish in general or sharks in particular. Pointed mouths and elongated bodies are generic characteristics of fish, but the dorsal fins could be an exaggeration of the distinctive shark fin. Such triangular fins and conspicuous gill slits as seen here are typical characteristics of sharks. Although it would be a hard task to distinguish the species of these painted animals, both fish and sharks were important dietary resources for the Nazca people and played a major role in the lives of fishermen. Interpreted as sharks, the images on this vessel would have been a reminder of the danger of sharks to fishermen, who used simple *totor* reed boats, and other people who may have gathered small shells and fish near shores.



Waterbird (Striated Heron)

Southern Coast, Nazca
Early Intermediate Period
1–700 CE
Ceramic

14.9 x 12.8 x 12.7 cm
Collection of Sam Olden
Courtesy of Mississippi Museum of Art
L0023.50

One of the most popular themes found on Nazca ceramic vessels is a vast variety of birds, depicted in different iconographies and painted in polychrome. This double-spouted ceramic vessel presents one example of a painted bird depiction created by a Nazca potter. Two nearly identical variations of a bird design decorate its surface. This large bird figure appears with an elongated neck, a sharp beak, and webbed feet, which are the general characteristics of a waterbird. Several striations are painted, even emphasized, on the wing of this bird. Such striations could mark the bird as a striated heron (*Butorides striatus*), which generally inhabits small wetlands or the shores of the river. The heron is a nonmigratory bird that feeds on fish.

Based on the number of Nazca objects and Nazca lines decorated with avian creatures similar to this painting, it seems that the Nazca were fond of this particular species and studied its characteristics, habitats, and diet. The sharp beak, elongated neck, and webbed feet depicted in this image of a striated heron indicate that the artists were careful observers of fish-eating waterbirds.



Condor

Southern Coast, Nazca
Early Intermediate Period
1–700 CE
Ceramic

16.4 x 14.3 x 14.2 cm
Collection of Sam Olden
Courtesy of Mississippi Museum of Art
L0024.50

This double-spouted, polychrome Nazca ceramic vessel depicts another important bird, a condor. Two almost identical condors are painted on this ceramic vessel. The condors on this vessel are shown with careful attention to their characteristic features: a sharp, short beak for tearing prey into pieces, a large body for overpowering prey, strong wings for flying high, and sharp talons for grasping prey more easily. The white feathers distinctively surrounding the base of the condor's neck were depicted with an elongated oval shape and colored with white slip. The large feathers on its wings were drawn with short and bold lines. The white patches particular to the wings of males were emphasized with a large, white rectangle decorated with striated lines. The general characteristics of the condor were all depicted in this image.

The condor is the largest and strongest bird of prey in South America. Because its body, talons, and wings are immense for its size, the condor has been considered a mountain spirit of the Andes and the sky-keeper. It is likely that the Nazca viewed this powerful condor as a mediator between the human realm and the spiritual world.



Crested Bird

Southern Coast, Nazca
Early Intermediate Period
1–700 CE
Ceramic

17.7 x 15.1 x 15.3 cm
Collection of Sam Olden
Courtesy of Mississippi Museum of Art
L0035.50

This double-spouted ceramic vessel is colored with white slip on the body and dark brown slip on the spout. Not only do the two colors on the spout and body contrast, but the Nazca potters probably used white slip intentionally on the body in order to accentuate the appearance of the bird and fish. This vessel is painted with two almost identical crested birds with ruffles along their necks. The birds are holding black and white fish in their mouths, about to swallow them. The crested bird is painted in a variety of colors, including orange, light brown, and sepia. Although the species of the crested bird has not been identified, it is apparent that this bird is a type of waterbird based on its webbed feet and elongated neck.

Hummingbird

Southern Coast, Nazca
Early Intermediate Period
1–700 CE
Ceramic

16.9 x 16.3 x 16.7 cm
Collection of Sam Olden
Courtesy of Mississippi Museum of Art
L0026.S0

This double-spouted ceramic vessel is painted with a hummingbird and flower. The white background on the body of the vessel accentuates the image of a hummingbird, whose long beak is penetrating an orange-colored flower. The hummingbird, painted in polychrome, has a characteristic dot pattern on its lower body, a red throat, and a blue-gray wing and head. These specific colors and patterns on its body suggest that the Nazca potters carefully portrayed the differences among specific species of hummingbirds, even though most of the hummingbirds on Nazca vessels were shown generically with beaks penetrating perfectly blossomed flowers.

Hummingbirds have many symbolic qualities that were important to the Nazca people. They stand for fecundity and prolific life because hummingbirds appear during the warm, wet weather of spring alongside blooming flowers. Because hummingbirds and flowers both symbolize spring, they are usually painted together on Nazca ceramic vessels. In addition to their symbolism of fertility, hummingbirds can be associated with warriors and hunters. Elizabeth Benson suggests that the sharp and long beak of a hummingbird can be interpreted as a weapon or sacrificial instrument, thus hummingbirds are associated with young warriors and hunting.¹¹

¹¹ Benson 1997, 78.





Feline-Headed Snake

Southern Coast, Nazca
Early Intermediate Period
1–700 CE
Ceramic

16.7 x 15.2 x 15.4 cm
Collection of Sam Olden
Courtesy of Mississippi Museum of Art
L0036.50

This double-spouted ceramic vessel is also painted with white slip on the body and black slip on the spout. The vessel is decorated with three almost identical feline-headed snakes: two in a U-shape adorn most of its surface and one in a straight form lies across the other two snakes. All three snakes are double-headed, and these heads additionally appear to exhibit feline characteristics. The two large paws connected to the lower face of the snake seem feline, while the elongated and thin tongue protruding from its mouth seems reptilian. The combination of these two very different animals creates a new mythical beast, the feline-headed serpent. Both felines and serpents are important animals deeply rooted into ancient Andean mythology and rituals.

Felines, in the form of jaguars, are some of the largest cats in the New World, and their attributes probably fascinated ancient Andean people. Jaguars are powerful, solitary predators of all other fauna, capable of hunting both by day and by night. Because of their incredible hunting skills, they became a model for hunters and warriors. Images of their impressive fangs and claws are usually present in depictions of ancient Andean anthropomorphic deities. Serpents, on the other hand, prey on rats, mice, lizards, and birds, all of which can intrude upon and ravage agricultural fields. For this reason, serpents are considered the protectors of fields and associated with fecundity. The composite creature depicted on this ceramic vessel, bearing both feline and serpentine characteristics, thus represents a special kind of Nazca deity.

MOCHE CULTURE

(50–800 CE)

The Moche culture flourished between approximately 50 and 800 CE on the northern coast of Peru, preceded in the same region by the Cupisnique culture, which existed between approximately 1200 and 200 BCE. The core of Moche culture grew in the Moche and Chicama river valleys, but its influence and style spread north as far as present-day Piura and south as far as the Huamey Valley. The Moche are well-known for masterful pottery and created a distinctive style that used sculptured decoration and themes varying from the naturalistic to the supernatural. Professional Moche craftsmen were capable of creating both sculptural modeling and figurative fineline painting, as well as handling the complex composition of pictorial scenes. By capturing elements of everyday life, rituals, legends, and mythology, they elevated utilitarian objects to an art form. Since the Moche had no written language to document their history, our insights into their lives are based on their ceramic depictions of fauna and flora, portraits of warriors, prisoners, fishermen, hunters, and shamans. Nearly every type of ceramic vessel from the Moche region has become a vital resource to understand their complex religion and elaborately stratified society. Because the Moche people established strong social roles, cultural systems, and religious practices, their culture easily spread to various other regions on the northern coast of Peru until the rise of Lambayeque (900–1100 CE) and Chimú (1100–1550 CE).



Pepinos

Northern Coast
Moche II
100–200 CE
Ceramic

17.8 x 17.5 x 11.1 cm
Collection of Mississippi Museum of Art
Gift of Sam Olden
1990.103

This stirrup-spouted vessel depicts two conjoined *pepino* fruits whose bodies are decorated with thin lines made from white clay. Such bright whiteness in clay is usually caused by a high percentage of the mineral kaolin. A slightly protruding round tip emphasizes the stem ends of the fruit. The paired-fruit form of this vessel may be inspired by the cosmology of the ancient Andean people, who believed in a dualistic relationship between the cosmos and microcosm. Dualistic oppositions that appear frequently in Andean art include black and white, male and female, night and day, and birth and death. The doubled fruit in this ceramic vessel may also symbolize such a pairing.

The red-brown color is a typical characteristic of Moche ceramic vessels in general, while the slightly thickened lip on the spout is characteristic of only one phase of Moche art, a period called Moche Phase II. Moche ceramic vessels are typically divided into five sequential phases based on variations in the spout form of stirrup-spouted bottles. Rafael Larco first articulated these distinctive categories in 1948: Moche I (50–100 CE), Moche II (100–200 CE), Moche III (200–450 CE), Moche IV (450–550 CE), and Moche V (550–800 CE).¹²

¹² Donnan 1976, 44.



Pepinos

Northern Coast
Moche II
100–200 CE
Ceramic

13.2 x 9.6 x 10.2 cm
Collection of Mississippi Museum of Art
Gift of Sam Olden
1990.109

This stirrup-spouted ceramic vessel shows two conjoined *pepino* fruits, which are decorated with longitudinal purple and red stripes. This decoration reflects the ripened state of the *pepino* fruit, when it is yellow with purple longitudinal stripes. It seems that it was the Moche's intention to particularly emphasize the ripeness of these fruit by decorating the vessel in this way. The *pepino* fruit shapes are covered with white slip and the stirrup spout is painted with red slip. Such contrasting use of white and red slips is one of the main characteristics of Moche ceramic vessels.

The main theme of this vessel is the *pepino* fruit (*Solanum muricatum*), generally known as the *pepino* melon in the United States. The shape of a *pepino* resembles a honeydew or cantaloupe, while the flavor is similar to a blend of cucumber and honeydew. Because of its sweetness and high water content, it is often mixed with green salad in Peru. *Pepino* originally came only from the higher elevations of Peru in the Andean mountains, and it has been used by Andeans in savory dishes for more than two thousand years.



Lucumas

Northern Coast
Moche IV
450–550 CE
Ceramic

19.8 x 13.4 x 13.3 cm
Collection of Mississippi Museum of Art
Gift of Sam Olden
1990.105

This stirrup-spouted ceramic vessel depicts four conjoined *lucumas*, which are indigenous to regions of South America that include Ecuador, Peru, Chile, and Colombia. Decorated with red-brown slip, this Moche ceramic has an elongated, slim spout with a thin, delicate lip. These are characteristics of Moche ceramics during Phase IV. The four conjoined *lucumas* may indicate the four cardinal directions (north, east, south, and west) that orient the cosmos and microcosm.

In Peru, this fruit is called *lucmo* (*Pouteria lucuma*), and Peruvians often turn it into a powder for making ice cream. While *lucuma* has a wonderful, sweet flavor, it also has a strange aftertaste, so Peruvians desiccate the fruit before powdering it. *Lucuma* ice cream is one of the most popular flavors in Peru.



Jaguar

Northern Coast

Moche II

100–200 CE

Ceramic

16.3 x 17.6 x 14.3 cm

Collection of Mississippi Museum of Art

Gift of Sam Olden

1990.110

This white-colored, stirrup-spouted vessel depicts a jaguar sitting on a pedestal decorated with three stripes. The jaguar's body is decorated with red-brown dots that mimic actual Peruvian jaguar pelage patterns. Its mouth is wide open to show its tongue and fangs, as if it is snarling. Its claws are big and visually emphasized with red-brown clay slip, revealing its physical strength. The animal's eyes are large, with pupils painted in red-brown clay slip. Such accentuation of the claws, eyes, and fangs of the jaguar emphasizes its impressive hunting skills.

The jaguar, the largest and strongest cat species in the Americas, is a dominant subject matter among Moche artifacts. Ancient Peruvians associated jaguars with particular symbolism in their religious and social ideologies. All wild cat species in South America are carnivorous, and seven of these species, including panthers and pumas, live near Peru in the Ecuadorian rain forest. Through trade with nearby cultures, the Moche people learned of the many impressive characteristics of these large, hunting beasts. Because of their size, speed, agility, and strength, these felines are threatening and powerful predators whose teeth and claws can easily bring down their prey. Their sharp fangs tear into flesh and chew through meat and bones. Jaguars, in particular, can swim very fast and also climb trees and perch on large branches. Their highly developed eyesight allows them to hunt prey both by day and by night. Because the jaguar's unique abilities relate to all three realms of sky, water, and earth, the ancient Andean people saw the jaguar as a mediator between the mundane and spirit worlds. As a result, the jaguar and its distinctive fangs became popular subjects in Moche ceramic vessels.



Jaguar Head

Northern Coast
Moche I
50–100 CE
Ceramic

15.7 x 11.2 x 15.3 cm
Collection of Mississippi Museum of Art
Gift of Sam Olden
1991.416

This stirrup-spouted ceramic vessel depicts a jaguar head. The application of red and white clay slip is typical of Moche ceramic vessels. This vessel exhibits a distinctive spout form with a thick, full lip characteristic of Phase I Moche ceramics. The animal's ears, nose, eyes, whiskers, fangs, and oval-shaped jaguar pelage motifs are accentuated with white clay slip to emphasize the physical abilities of the jaguar. Moche potters probably had good knowledge of animal characteristics and were able to identify this figure as particularly a jaguar, rather than simply a large feline. The widely opened mouth with sharp fangs additionally conveys the idea that this animal is capable of killing any mammal living in its territory.



Standing Dog

Northern Coast
Moche III
200–450 CE
Ceramic

18.1 x 15.5 x 22.3 cm
Collection of Mississippi Museum of Art
Gift of Sam Olden
1991.421

This stirrup-spouted ceramic vessel depicts a standing dog. The entire vessel is painted with white clay slip, and although the body is decorated with brown circular motifs normally considered to be jaguar pelage patterns, no claws or fangs are visible to identify it as a feline. Therefore, this creature should be considered a dog, not a jaguar. Engravings on the face of this dog indicate its eyes, mouth, nose, and whiskers. Its wiggling tail represents its loyal and friendly personality. Perhaps this figure represents a dog that accompanied its owner on hunting trips.

According to Elizabeth Benson, in folk literature throughout much of the Americas, dogs escort the dead on their journey to the underworld.¹³ This may explain why many canines have been found interred with men in Moche burial sites. The role of the dog as a guide to the underworld is similar to the role of a shaman, whose duty it is to guide a spirit to the underworld safely. Because of this particular religious role of dogs in Moche society, dogs are often depicted with various anthropomorphic gods in Moche art.

¹³ Benson 1997, 24.



Owl

Northern Coast
Moche IV(?)
450–550 CE
Ceramic

19 x 10.3 x 15.8 cm
Collection of Mississippi Museum of Art
Gift of Sam Olden
1990.111

This orange, stirrup-spouted ceramic vessel depicts an owl. The large eyes are emphasized with another large oval-shape surrounding them, reminiscent of the plumage that often surrounds the eyes of real owls. It seems that a Moche potter tried to depict this subject naturalistically. The animal's small, curved beak is located between its eyes. These physical characteristics all mark this as the great horned owl, native to South America.

In ancient Peruvian culture, owls were considered a special and powerful type of bird because of their predation, nocturnal nature, and mournful voices. Based on the owl's agility and ability to hunt their prey at night, Moche people saw owls as supernatural warriors and brilliant hunters.



Owl

Northern Coast
Moche II
100–200 CE
Ceramic

21.4 x 9.4 x 16.2 cm
Collection of Mississippi Museum of Art
Gift of Sam Olden
1994.038

This cream-colored, stirrup-spouted ceramic vessel depicts an owl that differs slightly from the previous image. This owl is standing on two thick feet with strong talons. Its eye areas are emphasized with distinctive feathers. This owl has large wings and a strong tail. These attributes represent the specific characteristics of an owl that can fly quickly to catch its prey in darkness with sharp talons and incredible vision. Its strong, firm tail helps it to balance while struggling to catch moving prey. The warrior in Moche society sought association with the owl's incredible hunting skills and physical characteristics, including talons, wings, eyes, and tail.



Parrot

Northern Coast

Moche I

50–100 CE

Ceramic

18.3 x 7.8 x 16.9 cm

Collection of Mississippi Museum of Art

Gift of Sam Olden

1994.034

This stirrup-spouted vessel depicts a parrot seated on a cylindrical pedestal. This vessel also shows the typical red and cream-colored clay slips often found on Moche ceramics. The round stirrup-spout with a thick, full lip is representative of a ceramic from Moche Phase I.

The parrot depicted on this vessel has a large face with a huge beak; a curved upper beak is covering the lower beak. Its large wings, talons, and eyes are accentuated with creamy-white clay slip. Balanced by its large tail feathers, it sits comfortably on the pedestal. The Moche valued parrots in particular because of their ability to vocalize and mimic speech, since the ability to communicate by speaking is typically considered the privilege of humans. Additionally, the extraordinarily colorful feathers of parrots caught the attention of the Moche and became a valued material for embellishing the attire of warriors, elites, royalty, and priests who could afford to have these exotic bird feathers imported from the Amazonian or Ecuadorian rain forests. Parrots and their feathers were used by privileged people to broadcast their social and religious status to others.



Head of Sea Lion

Northern Coast

Moche I

50–100 CE

Ceramic

18.5 x 9 x 12.3 cm

Collection of Mississippi Museum of Art

Gift of Sam Olden

1992.007

This stirrup-spouted vessel depicts a sea lion painted with variations of red-colored slip. Features such as the animal's eyes, nose, lips, and fangs, as well as the fish held captive in its mouth, are colored slightly more yellow than the rest of the figure. By using a contrasting color of slip, the Moche potter accentuates the characteristics of the sea lion. Portrait heads of sea lions are a frequent subject of Moche ceramic vessels due to the importance of sea lions as a food source and further ritual associations. One Moche ceramic vessel located in the collection of the Rafael Larco Herrera Museum in Lima depicts a particularly notable scene of sea lion hunting. In it, a large man holding a sizable club is about to hit the head of a giant sea lion. Based on this piece, it is reasonable to speculate that the Moche hunted sea lion, a practice which would have provided Moche artists with the familiarity necessary to create this extremely naturalistic image of a sea lion in the collection of the Mississippi Museum of Art.

Sea lions tend to swallow pebbles located on the shore where they lie and relax under the warm sunshine. Christopher Donnan notes that shamans in present-day Peru use stones from the stomachs of sea lions to heal sick people.¹⁴ Because sea lions are omnivores and have a notably large appetite, the ancient Moche may have considered the pebbles from their stomachs to be sacred items with healing powers.

¹⁴ Donnan 1978, 136.



Feline-Headed Serpent Vessel

Northern Coast
Moche
50–800 CE
Ceramic

36.2 x 8.3 x 12.8 cm
Collection of Mississippi Museum of Art
Gift of Sam Olden
1990.120

This orange-colored ceramic vessel depicts a composite figure of a serpent and a jaguar. The body exhibits a serpent form and the face shows feline features. The serpent body is decorated with long, cream-colored, zigzag lines. The sharp fangs, ears, and bulging eyes are colored with white clay slip in order to emphasize the feline characteristics. The saw-like feline teeth convey the creature's physical strength and ability to hunt prey.

The combination of serpent and feline is a popular theme found in ancient Andean artifacts. Serpents symbolize fertility and are associated with water, which is considered the essence of human life. Felines represent the core of the earthly realm where human beings dwell. It seems that this vessel was used to hold a liquid such as *chicha*, a fermented beverage derived from maize. This serpent-feline vessel represents themes related to a variety of rituals concerning fecundity and prosperity.



Warrior

Northern Coast

Moche

50–800 CE

Ceramic

29.4 x 18.4 x 12.7 cm

Collection of Mississippi Museum of Art

Gift of Sam Olden

1991.414

This ceramic vessel depicts a man with a powerful personality indicated by his bulbous nose, stubbornly closed lips, sharp cheekbones, glaring eyes, and thick chin. He is holding a war club and shield as well as various other body ornaments, including a spiky necklace, large circular earrings, and a cylindrical headdress decorated with a *tumi* knife motif on its forehead. Based on these body decorations and regalia, it is obvious that the figure is a warrior. Warriors played a prominent role as protectors and representatives of Moche society.



Blind Beggar

Northern Coast
Moche I
50–100 CE
Ceramic

15.5 x 9.4 x 12.7 cm
Collection of Sam Olden
Courtesy of Mississippi Museum of Art
L0115.50

This stirrup-spouted vessel depicts a blind, begging man. The red and white slip painting on the surface is typical of Moche ceramics. The thick, full lip on a short cylindrical spout marks this as belonging to Phase I of the Moche chronology. This seated man is holding a small bowl in his right hand and his abnormally large left hand is resting on his lap. His entire body is wrapped with one large piece of fabric, distinguished by a lighter color that contrasts with his red-colored face, hands, and feet.

His pupilless eyes suggest blindness. The bulbous nose, serious frown, and unusually oversized left hand are other possible indications of disfigurement. Perhaps this man suffered from certain tropical diseases, which are usually accompanied by high fever and swelling skin. Many Moche ceramics depict this type of portrait of a disfigured person suffering from a painful or deadly disease. The social status of these diseased figures may have been elevated out of respect for their determination to survive cruel illnesses. They may even have been considered sacred beings because of this view.



Owl Warrior

Northern Coast

Moche IV

450–550 CE

Ceramic

21.7 x 11.4 x 15.3 cm

Collection of Mississippi Museum of Art

Gift of Sam Olden

1991.419

This stirrup-spouted vessel depicts an owl-warrior wearing an owl mask, necklace, and pointed helmet. This man is also holding a round shield and corn-shaped war club. Although Moche potters used only two colors of clay slip, red and white, the figure presents a dynamic and energetic image. The mask illustrates extremely detailed attributes of an owl: the eyes are surrounded by radiating lines that mimic feathers, and a sharp beak lies between the eyes. Owls symbolize the supernatural warrior in Moche society because of their brilliant hunting skills. Indeed, the war club and shield held by the owl-warrior indicate the inseparable relationship between war iconography and the owl.

Warrior with Sea Bird Head Ring

Northern Coast

Moche IV

450–550 CE

Ceramic

24.2 x 15.7 x 17.3 cm

Collection of Mississippi Museum of Art

Gift of Sam Olden

1994.037

This ceramic vessel depicts a portrait of a nobleman. This man has a large nose, high cheekbones, obstinately closed lips, and sharp eyes representing his strong leadership as an elite in the Moche society. His social status is also reflected in his head-dress, a head cloth that covers the top and back of his head. This type of head cloth is often secured by another textile headband that lies across the top of the head and is tied under the chin. Over the head cloth and headband, the figure wears a head ring as added decoration and denotation of his social status. A head ring is normally made out of cane or wood. It is usually thick, round, and decorated with the heads of animals or shaped with an animal form.

This head ring is decorated with backward-looking seabirds, identifiable by their characteristic long, curved necks. A chevron shape is centered between the birds. Because chevron motifs are particular common on head rings with bird images, Elizabeth Benson suggested that the chevron probably refers to wings or flight.¹⁵ Sea birds generally have great visual acuity in order to track down their underwater prey, and they are extremely speedy in catching fast-moving fish—abilities that would have been desirable for Moche warriors. By decorating his head ring with sea bird motifs, the figure presents himself as a warrior who wants to possess the hunting abilities of a sea bird. It is also possible that the head ring decoration represents a particular social status in this portrait of a Moche man.

¹⁵ Benson 1998, 127.



Adolescent Riding a Llama

Northern Coast
Moche IV
450–550 CE
Ceramic

23.2 x 19.8 x 10.3 cm
Collection of Sam Olden
Courtesy of Mississippi Museum of Art
L0064.S0

This stirrup-spouted vessel depicts an adolescent riding a llama. The human figure wears a headband decorated with bean motifs. The naturalistic depiction of the llama is one of the highlights of this vessel. The animal's large and elongated ears make its hearing sensitive to nearby dangers. Its large, oval-shaped eyes, the rope on its head and body, and the luggage on its back suggest that the llama has been tamed for transportation in the rugged highlands. Because llamas have no problem adjusting to changes in altitude, they became extremely important for trade between the highlands and the coast. Although a llama can only carry between 75 and 115 pounds, this vessel shows a llama carrying both luggage and a person. Since a llama generally will sit without standing until his load is light enough, one can conclude that the person riding the llama in this vessel might be an adolescent, not a full-grown adult.

This adolescent wears a headband decorated with bean motifs, which are related to the adolescent initiation ceremony. The bean motif is also usually associated with warriors or message-runners in Moche art. Here, the beans probably symbolize the adolescent's bravery in transferring goods from one place to another. The transportation of merchandise by a young boy shows initiative and helps prove that he is responsible enough to do greater work in the future. Llama riders occasionally ride their mounts backwards, as depicted in this vessel, in order to balance their weight with the weight of the load when the llama is crossing a river.







Seated Nobleman on Throne

Northern Coast
Moche III
200–450 CE
Ceramic

20.7 x 9.2 x 17.8 cm
Collection of Sam Olden
Courtesy of Mississippi Museum of Art
L0068.50

This stirrup-spouted vessel depicts an elite member of society seated on a throne. The vessel's spout is short, thick, and slightly opened, which is a characteristic of Moche Phase III. The combination of white and red clay slip is also definitive of Moche ceramics. The nobleman is wearing a corn-shaped helmet and large, round, disk-shaped ear ornaments, and he is seated on a stepped throne. Among his body paraphernalia, the ear ornaments are distinctive and especially important in understanding his identity. These disk-shaped earrings, trimmed with small marble-shaped ornaments, are typically made out of gold, gilded copper, or silver, which are expensive and precious metals solely available to noblemen. Based on his expensive ornaments and throne, one can conclude that he is a nobleman.



Standing Man

Northern Coast
Moche II
100–200 CE
Ceramic

19.9 x 10.7 x 15.4 cm
Collection of Sam Olden
Courtesy of Mississippi Museum of Art
L0102.S0

This stirrup-spouted vessel portrays a theme associated with daily Moche life in the typical red and white color scheme of Moche ceramics. The subject is a standing man wearing ordinary fashion for a Moche male. The man wears a headband decorated with concentric circles underneath a headdress. Headbands with geometric designs are usually used for securing headdresses, but the long headband on this figure seems to ornament the top of his head and is tied simply underneath his chin. Above the headband, the headdress with triangular designs covers the entire upper part of the head. Different headdresses were used in Moche society to indicate the wearer's social status and authority. The figure is wearing a type of tubular ear ornament that is sometimes accompanied by trapezoidal elements or disk-shaped earrings. Although he is wearing a cape, loincloth, belt, headband, headdress, and elaborate ear ornaments, it is difficult to identify the man's social status without additional body paraphernalia. Therefore, this vessel can best be used to understand the attire worn by Moche people.



Coca-Chewing Man

Northern Coast
Moche II
100–200 CE
Ceramic

18.9 x 18.7 x 15.1 cm
Collection of Sam Olden
Courtesy of Mississippi Museum of Art
L0107.50

This stirrup-spouted vessel shows a seated man whose body is wrapped in one large, textile tunic. His head, hands, and feet are colored with red clay slip, but his ear-rings and cloth are colored with white clay slip. According to Elizabeth Benson, the acorn-shaped or cap-like hair is often associated with early Moche ceramic depictions of coca-chewing men. Such men are usually portrayed wearing a bag of coca around their necks.¹⁶ The figure in this vessel has cap-like hair and holds a coca bag on his right shoulder, showing the typical characteristics of a Moche coca-chewer. The figure's eyes are painted with white slip, the pupils with red. His crouching body is covered with a white cloth decorated with three stripes on either side. His facial features and body position suggest that he might be worried. The Moche potters who depicted this crouching man had a great sensitivity to their own culture and were able to convey an aspect of the everyday life of an ordinary man.

¹⁶ Benson 1998, 136.



Fineline Iguana

Northern Coast
Moche III
200–450 CE
Ceramic

23.3 x 15.6 x 15.7 cm
Collection of Mississippi Museum of Art
Gift of Sam Olden
1991.420

This stirrup-spouted ceramic vessel is an example of the type of fineline drawing for which Moche ceramics are famous. These drawings are created on ceramics by first applying a layer of white slip to the surface of the vessel before it is completely dry or fired. After the vessel and white slip is completely dry or fired, artists use slip that is colored red due to its different mineral content to draw finelines and images on the white background. Nearly all Moche ceramics are painted with at least one color of slip, and some, like this one, receive their primary decoration in the form of such painting. This process is usually painstaking and requires fastidious craftsmanship. When the ceramic surface is completely dried, it draws moisture from the brush and catches the brush hair, making it difficult for the craftsman to move the brush smoothly over the surface. In order to draw the perfect fineline images commonly found on Moche ceramics, a highly trained craftsman was required.

Moche artisans typically painted their vessels according to particular themes. This example is painted with the four nearly identical iguanas. They have large feet exhibiting sharp claws, which are extremely important for climbing trees and running quickly. The Moche potters outlined these iguanas with pointed muzzles, fat bellies, and striated bodies. Such naturalistic depictions of iguanas are rare in Moche culture, where iguanas are usually portrayed as anthropomorphic figures. The iguana's role in Moche society is considered highly significant and symbolic: they provided a source of food to ancient Peruvians and they have the incredible ability to regenerate a tail that has been amputated. These factors probably meant that they were associated with fertility in Moche culture.

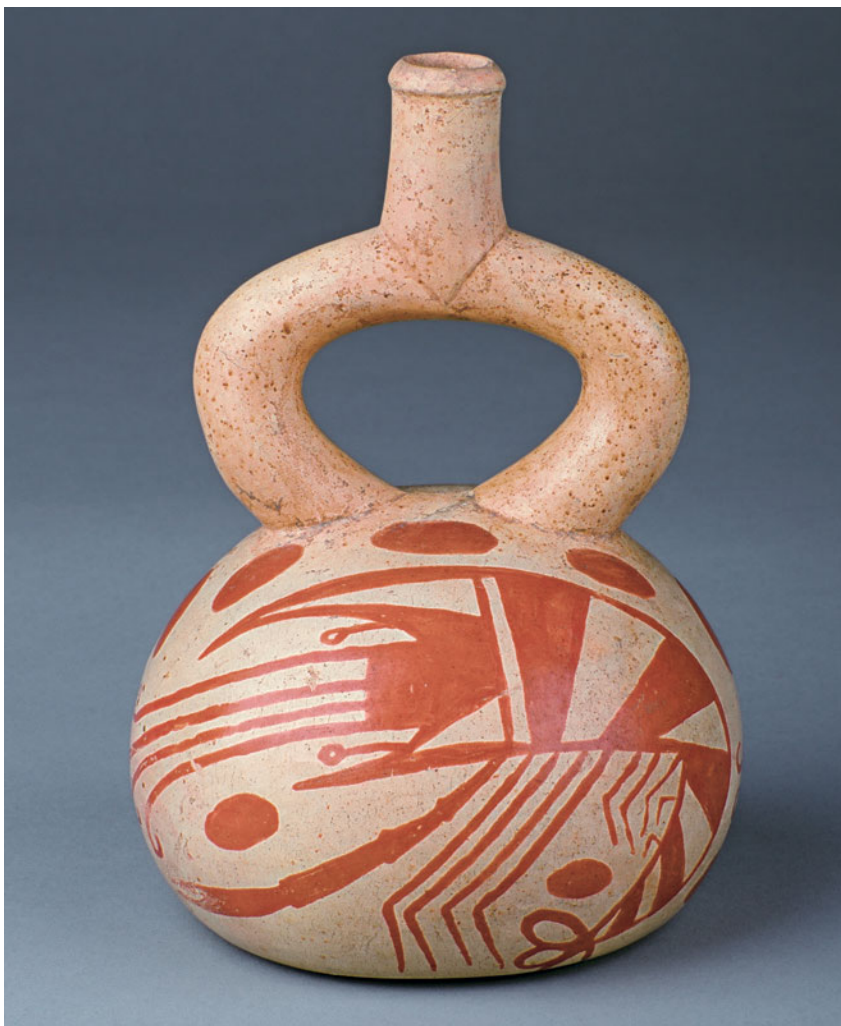


Fineline Platform Design

Northern Coast
Moche V
550–800 CE
Ceramic

22.7 x 13.5 x 11.8 cm
Collection of Mississippi Museum of Art
Gift of Sam Olden
1994.040

This stirrup-spouted vessel is painted with a repetitious platform design. The white slip surface of the vessel was a perfect canvas for the Moche potter to create painted designs. The stirrup spout is one visual proof that the Moche are a continuation of the Cupisnique culture, and in this vessel, a thick line of red slip on the spout accentuates the stirrup shape. The vessel's body is covered with a platform design, which bears multiple symbolic meanings. It can be interpreted as a royal palace or a ritual ceremony structure, each of which is built to echo the shape of mountains or hills. These man-made architectural forms dynamically relate to their surrounding natural environment, creating a sacred place that can aid a shaman attempting to interact with the supernatural world. Large ritual structures such as these are usually made out of adobe, which requires large amounts of water. Since water was a precious resource, these adobe structures were only built for royalty or supernatural beings.



Fineline Shrimp

Northern Coast

Moche I

50–100 CE

Ceramic

18.1 x 12.8 x 12.6 cm

Collection of Sam Olden

Courtesy of Mississippi Museum of Art

L0087.50

This stirrup-spouted ceramic vessel is decorated with a large shrimp design in fine-line painting on top of white clay slip. Two almost identical shrimps dominate the surface of the vessel's body. Their antennae are long and naturally curved, and their sharp rostrums are enhanced by two small, circular eyes. Their bodies are decorated with thick stripes in alternating white and red. Large circular dots surrounding these shrimps suggest that they are swimming under water. The fineline shrimp drawings show not only a part of the everyday diet of the Moche people, but also their humor and whimsy in observing nature.

Monkey Wearing Crescent-Shaped Headdress

Northern Coast
Moche IV
450–550 CE
Ceramic

24.4 x 12.2 x 14.3 cm
Collection of Sam Olden
Courtesy of Mississippi Museum of Art
L0084.S0

This stirrup-spouted vessel depicts many important pictorial elements, including a monkey wearing a crescent-shaped headdress, a fan, and adobe bricks. Except for the monkey's face and legs, all the elements are drawn with fineline painting. The elegantly shaped stirrup spout is decorated with a repeated bean motif. In Moche society, beans were a staple for warriors on the battlefield or long-distance messengers because they are easy to carry and cook, and they provide high protein.

The cylindrical body of this ceramic vessel is patterned with adobe bricks decorated with a two-circle motif, a type of brick found at the Moche sites of Huaca del Sol and Huaca de la Luna. Because of the extravagant amount of water required to create adobe bricks, they are only used for constructing royal palaces or sacred temples. Both Huaca del Sol and Huaca de la Luna have a large adobe pyramid on site, among the largest such pyramids located in the lower Moche Valley. In order to fund such massive projects, each ethnic group was required to pay taxes, and labor was considered part of the tax duty. Workers from every ethnic group incised their own emblems on the adobe bricks that they produced as a record of their tax payment.

The placement of the head and feet of the monkey at the bottom of this ceramic vessel suggest that it is supporting the entire adobe structure with its body. Monkeys are generally treated as sacred beings because their physical attributes are similar to those of humans. Each section of the adobe structure is decorated with fan-shaped motifs similar to the headdresses used by noblemen in Moche society, with the one on the back being the largest. The fact that the foundation is decorated with the form of a headdress usually worn by a nobleman may suggest that the ritual structure is supported by the power of his social authority and status.





Fineline Snail

Northern Coast
Moche IV
450–550 CE
Ceramic

28.1 x 15.8 x 14.8 cm
Collection of Sam Olden
Courtesy of Mississippi Museum of Art
L0088.50

This stirrup-spouted vessel is painted with repeated snail motifs. The body of this vessel is divided into three layers by bands of red clay slip. On each layer, several snails are depicted with slimy, elongated bodies and spiral snail shells. Even though they have fanged faces and pointed ears akin to a feline, their eyes and mouths seem to smile and exhibit a sense of humor. This Moche ceramic vessel is another example representing the whimsy of Moche potters.

Based on various fineline images on stirrup-spouted vessels that seem to depict snail hunting, Elizabeth Benson suggests that the snail hunt was a rite.¹⁷ One such image depicts snails, cacti, and other plants in a battle or ritual scene with warriors. Based on this example, the interaction between snails and humans in battle can be understood as a sacred moment. Dried snails can be used to make a purple powder for dyeing fabric, and although there is no archaeological evidence that Moche people used such a technique, such images make it possible to speculate that they did use snails to dye their elaborately designed clothes or headdress textiles. This dye made from snails, used for woven images of religious ceremonies, deities, and shamans, might have been considered an important aspect of the rich and profound religious system of the Moche.

¹⁷ Benson 1997, 119.



Fineline Bird Warrior

Northern Coast
Moche IV
450–550 CE
Ceramic

26.7 x 15.3 x 15.2 cm
Collection of Sam Olden
Courtesy of Mississippi Museum of Art
L0089.50

This stirrup-spouted vessel is painted with the image of bird warriors on the top section of its body. They show anthropomorphic bodies with birdlike features, including feathers and a pointed beak. The figures hold shields and war clubs. Warriors on Moche art are occasionally depicted with bodies combining human and avian attributes. By intertwining these two, Moche warriors were able to gather physical powers from animals such as speed, agility, heightened eyesight, and flight. Warriors needed these qualities on the battlefield as they protected their ethnic group or took war booty, including sacrificial slaves.

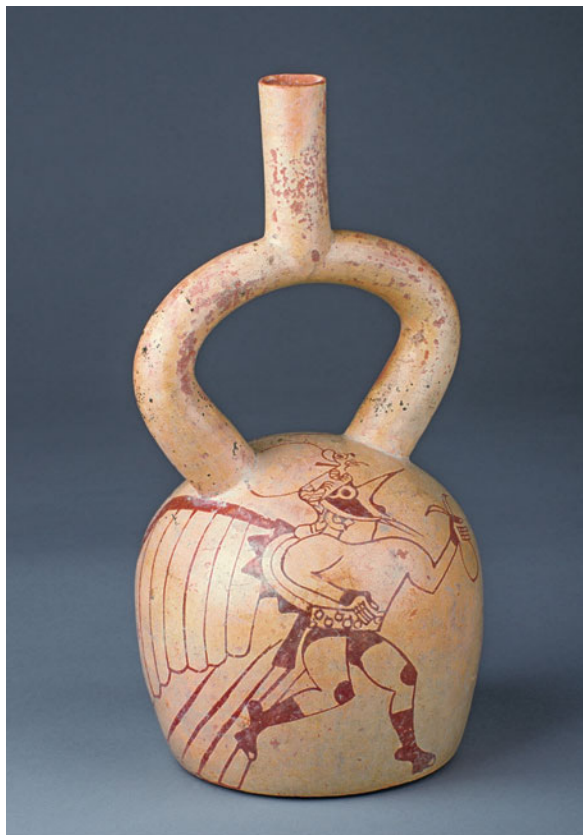


Fineline Nobleman on a Totora Reed Boat

Northern Coast
Moche IV
450–550 CE
Ceramic

27.7 x 14.9 x 14.7 cm
Collection of Sam Olden
Courtesy of Mississippi Museum of Art
L0090.50

This stirrup-spouted vessel is decorated with two feline-headed *totora* reed boats. Drawings such as these are evidence that the Moche used boats made out of bundles of reeds. This same type of vehicle is still used today on the northern coast of Peru in places like Huanchaco. In the painting on this vessel, two fishermen row one of the boats, directed by an anthropomorphic deity with avian features. Three additional anthropomorphic figures swim below the boat. Another boat is depicted with a nobleman passenger accompanying a fisherman, who rows the boat by himself. The nobleman's status is indicated by his stepped headdress decorated with a crescent-shaped ornament. Such headdresses were probably made out of gold, silver, or copper alloy, and decorated elaborately, distinguishing them from other, more simplistic headdresses created for fishermen.



Fineline Runners

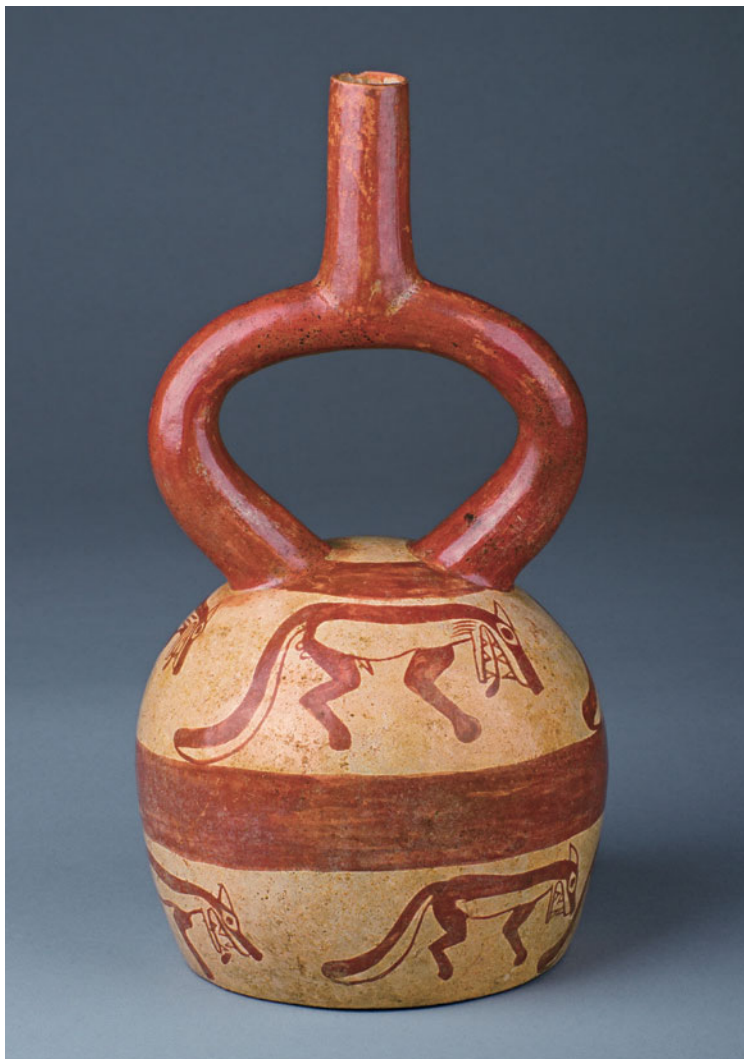
Northern Coast
Moche IV
450–550 CE
Ceramic

27.2 x 14.1 x 13.8 cm
Collection of Sam Olden
Courtesy of Mississippi Museum of Art
L0091.50

This stirrup-spouted vessel depicts a runner carrying a bag, an image common in Moche art. The runner wears a loincloth and an elaborate headdress covered by a head ring. The head ring is decorated with a feline face and a circular ornament on top. The runner wears an avian mask and large feathered wings. Like warriors, runners also sought avian characteristics in order to increase their physical power and gain the ability to travel quickly as if in flight.

Runners often required amazing physical strength and endurance to deliver messages from one place to another. During the Inca period, runners carried important messages from the coast to places as far as the highlands, essentially covering all of the Inca Empire on foot. According to Elizabeth Benson, runners from the Moche period appear to have been more ritualistic and held a greater symbolic importance in religious ceremonies, at least judging by the runners that were immortalized in ceramic.¹⁸

¹⁸ Benson 1997, 141.



Fineline Fox

Northern Coast
Moche IV
450–550 CE
Ceramic

26.4 x 14.2 x 13.9 cm
Collection of Sam Olden
Courtesy of Mississippi Museum of Art
L0092.S0

This stirrup-spouted vessel is painted with repeated images of foxes, which play a wide range of prominent roles in Moche culture. These figures bear the distinctive characteristics of a fox, such as triangular ears, a tongue coming straight out of its snout, an elongated tail divided into red and white sections, and a straight-back or curved tail. Such naturalistic portrayal of this subject is unusual for Moche art, where foxes are typically depicted anthropomorphically and associated with Moche runners or warriors.



**Shaman with
Baby Formed in
Yacón Root**

Northern Coast
Moche
50–800 CE
Ceramic

18.8 × 14.2 × 33.7 cm
Collection of Mississippi Museum of Art
Gift of Sam Olden
1991.415

This large jar depicts a fanged head, a baby, and *yacón* roots. The fanged head wearing a cylindrical headdress connects to a *yacón* body, while the baby is intertwined into this body as if the larger figure is holding it against his chest. His face has bulging eyes, which are almost popping out of his face, and several fangs protruding out of his mouth. This facial expression seems to suggest a shaman in a trance after ingesting hallucinogenic substances. Like his body, his ears are also transformed into the shape of *yacón* roots, which contains anti-hyperglycemic substances used in modern times for healing and treating diabetes. *Yacón* root has been used medicinally from the ancient Andean period to the present. Healing is one of the many important duties of a shaman in keeping balance and order in society. Shamans' knowledge about items such as stones, crystals, herbs, and poisons help them heal the sick. On this jar, the shaman embraces a baby who may be suffering from a sickness. The fact that the baby's body fuses with that of the shaman may indicate that the shaman is healing the baby's disease.

**Seated Shaman
Attended by Animals
and a Baby**

Northern Coast
Moche IV(?)
450–550 CE
Ceramic

17.3 x 11.8 x 20.3 cm
Collection of Mississippi Museum of Art
Gift of Sam Olden
1994.032

This stirrup-spouted vessel depicts a very unique scene. A seated adult figure is attended by a fox and a bird in front of him and by a dog and a baby on either side. The figures rest inside a nicely designed architectural structure. The adult figure's bulging, dilated eyes and fanged mouth could identify him either as a shaman transformed into a feline or as a deity being offered the dog and baby as sacrifices. Dogs are considered important companion animals for humans and are often found in Moche burial sites as offerings. Under the Inca Empire, young children also were used as sacrifices because they can be regarded as having exceptional purity. No sacrifices of young children have been excavated from Moche sites, but because of the important symbolism of children as pure beings, it is possible that they were symbolically offered to shamans or deities.

Whether the main figure of this vessel is a shaman or a supernatural deity, both types of being would have a strong obligation to pursue balance between the cosmic and microcosmic worlds. Because of this role, it is possible that shamans and deities required runners to inform them of distant matters and extend their influence beyond their local region. The fox and the bird that attend this seated figure may be animal representations of such runners, who are usually depicted with fox, feline, avian, or bean motifs.







Shaman Washing Hair

Northern Coast

Moche IV

450–550 CE

Ceramic

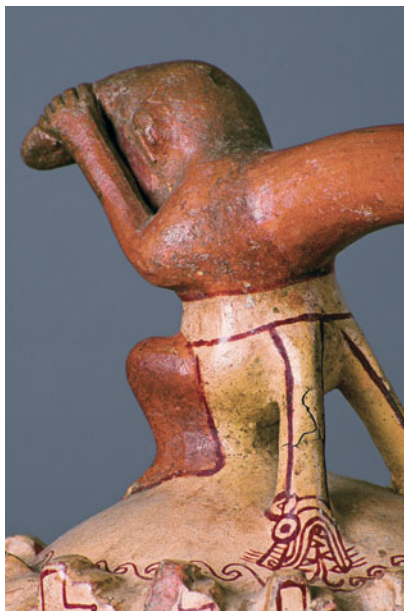
22.3 x 11.4 x 15.4 cm

Collection of Mississippi Museum of Art

Gift of Sam Olden

1994.039

This stirrup-spouted ceramic vessel depicts a man washing his hair, a scene that commonly appears in Moche ceramics to express a theme of daily life. This particular man, however, has unique facial features and body characteristics that mark the image as something different. His bulging eyes are associated with the ingestion of hallucinogenic substances, and his fanged mouth suggests a shamanic transformation from human to feline. His loincloth and belt are also decorated with feline imagery, further indicating that this figure might actually be a shaman. The man's back is connected to one of the stirrup-spouts, making his entire body part of the spout, and his perch atop the vessel resembles the apex of a mountain surrounded by wave motifs and further surrounded by a stepped pyramid design. This stepped pyramid may represent the temple architecture of a site where this shaman would be performing a ritual for abundant water and fertility. Based on the facial features and context of this figure, one can conclude that he is a shaman washing his hair in preparation for such a rite. Even this normal human activity of washing hair requires water, the essence of fertility and human life.





Shaman

Northern Coast
Moche IV
450–550 CE
Ceramic

24.5 x 10.3 x 18.4 cm
Collection of Mississippi Museum of Art
Gift of Sam Olden
1994.036

This stirrup-spouted vessel portrays the head of a man with a wrinkled face and bulging eyes wearing a circular head ornament, a necklace of owl heads, and feline-faced earrings. The man is probably the deity known as “Wrinkle Face,” who associated himself with entities from the supernatural world such as the spirits of owls or felines. In this image, the figure’s body takes the form of a rectangular ceramic vessel. Such a union between a supernatural being and a utilitarian object suggests the animistic notion that this vessel is spiritually animated.



Shaman Warrior

Northern Coast
Moche IV
450–550 CE
Ceramic

24.9 x 14.3 x 19.7 cm
Collection of Sam Olden
Courtesy of Mississippi Museum of Art
L0094.50

This Moche Phase IV stirrup-spouted ceramic vessel depicts a warrior. This vessel is unique within the Sam Olden collection because it shows a combination of molding technique and fineline drawing. The face is created by using a press mold, and it has feline features—the eyes are dilated and the open mouth reveals sharp fangs. The figure is in a shamanic trance to transform from a human to a feline, but the body of the vessel is decorated with warrior paraphernalia, including a circular shield and conical war club. The two very different themes of shaman and warrior are combined as one subject in this vessel. This fact may indicate two possibilities: first, Moche potters may have intended to represent the desire of the Moche warrior to obtain feline powers for battle, or second, Moche potters may have been depicting a mythical warrior deity figure, who has feline characteristics.

TIWANAKU CULTURE

(400–800 CE)

The Tiwanaku culture was widespread in the southernmost section of the Andes and centered in the Lake Titicaca region. The heart of this culture was the ceremonial center known as Tiwanaku. Three important ritual ceremonial structures are located there: the Akapana, a large stepped pyramid mound, the Kalasasaya, a rectangular gathering plaza, and the Puma Punku, a ceremonial structure situated separately from the two previous main ritual centers. The most elaborate and intriguing deity image of this culture is carved on the Sun Gate of the Kalasasaya complex, holding a spear thrower in his right hand and a spear in his left hand while surrounded by shamans who have transformed themselves from human to bird figures. This anthropomorphic deity and the shamans all represent the religious ideology of Tiwanaku people.

Tiwanaku ceramics are characterized by finely produced, sophisticated designs and forms. One of the most popular styles found in Tiwanaku ceramics is *qero*-shaped cups, which are decorated with anthropomorphic figures, supernatural flying beings, trophy heads, sacrificial victims, and stepped designs. These cups are generally decorated with polychrome painting. Although the colors on Tiwanaku ceramics are not as vivid and lucid as the colored clay slips applied to Nazca ceramics, Tiwanaku potters used modern color combinations with an elegant and stylish vision.



Qero-Shaped Cup

Southern Coast, Tiwanaku

Middle Horizon Period

500–800 CE

Ceramic

9.7 x 9.3 x 9.1 cm

Collection of Mississippi Museum of Art

Gift of Sam Olden

1990.100

This ceramic cup is painted with various designs in polychrome. It is divided into two sections, each with a very similar composition: a human head flanked by the head of an animal on each side. The animal head with pointed ears and large eyes may indicate a llama, while on top of this group, a serpentine creature flies. These figures are simplified in terms of form. For example, the human face is a simple rectangle with two circular eyes, an oblong nose, and rectangular lips. Every figure on this cup is delineated with thick, black outlines in order to enhance the clarity of the colors applied on the images. Although the polychrome colors are tinted and muted, the strong black outlines make each figure distinctive and even animated. The combination of these various figures may be associated with a mythical narrative of the Tiwanaku culture.

The shape of this polychrome painted cup indicates it as a *qero*, a type of cup used to share liquid (usually *chicha*) between two people during a ritual ceremony. By sharing a liquid considered to be the essence of life, these two people not only shared life, but also exchanged spiritual power. Because of the specific function of this type of cup, ritually smashed *qeros* were interred inside burial sites with the deceased, indicating that they were “killed” when the owners of these objects died.¹⁹ Based on such archaeological evidence, a *qero* is not to be understood as just a simple ceramic object, but rather the spiritual alter ego of its owner.

¹⁹ Stone-Miller 1995, 129–130.



**Llama Incense
Burner (?)**

Southern Coast, Tiwanaku

Middle Horizon Period

500–800 CE

Ceramic

11.7 x 6.8 x 16.4 cm

Collection of Mississippi Museum of Art

Gift of Sam Olden

1990.101

This ceramic depicts a standing llama with pierced and pointed ears, decorated with red and white clay slips. The four legs of the llama support its chubby body. Llamas were considered an important mode of transportation in the ancient Andes, and they often appear as a main theme throughout ancient Andean artifacts. A geometric stair motif colored with white clay slip is painted on both sides of this llama's body. On its back, the mouth of this vessel is shaped into an elegant flared opening. Because of the small opening, the function of this vessel is ambiguous. The elevated body with four legs suggests that it may have been used as an incense burner.

LAMBAYEQUE CULTURE

(Sicán, 900–1100 CE)

The Lambayeque culture developed in the Lambayeque Valley between approximately 900 and 1100 CE, prior to the Chimú culture that conquered that region around the twelfth century. Two major city complexes served as powerful centers of the Lambayeque culture, Batán Grande located in La Leche Valley and Túcume situated on the hill of Purgatorio. The most common artistic motif of the Lambayeque culture is depiction of the heads of a mythical supreme ruler called the Sicán Lord. Portrayal of this figure was standardized, so that the head of a Sicán Lord is typically shown wearing a great mask with winged eyes and butterfly-shaped ears with circular ear ornaments. A terrestrial ruler might have tried to legitimize his rule by linking his lineage to this mythical and supreme entity through the creation of artifacts with this imagery.

Lambayeque-style ceramics are characterized by a distinctive black color, which is the result of a reduction atmosphere firing process. This darkened black surface enhances the value of the pottery. In general, press molds were used in order to create elaborate sculptural images, including the images of the Sicán Lord. The distinctive shapes of Lambayeque pottery include double spouts, bridge handles, flaring pedestal bases, stair-shaped decorations, and spouts in the shape of the Sicán Lord. The double spout and bridge handle forms were later adopted by Chimú potters when their culture absorbed the Lambayeque style and ceramic techniques.



**Spouted Vessel
with the Head of
a Sicán Lord**

Northern Coast, Lambayeque
Late Intermediate Period
900–1100 CE
Ceramic

15.2 x 12.7 x 14.9 cm
Collection of Mississippi Museum of Art
Gift of Sam Olden
1989.015

This oval-shaped ceramic vessel depicts the head of the Sicán Lord on its spout. The head has circular eyes emphasized with concentric lines, a protruding nose, slanted lips, large butterfly-shaped ears with ear spools, and a facial marking with concentric lines. The oval-shaped vessel represents the body belonging to this human head. This vessel exhibits four important elements characteristic of Lambayeque ceramics: the molding technique, the reduction atmosphere firing, the head of the Sicán Lord, and the flaring pedestal base. Although typical in style, this shiny, black Lambayeque vessel is of fine quality.



Double-Spouted Vessel with Incised Decoration

Northern Coast, Lambayeque
Late Intermediate Period
900–1100 CE
Ceramic

19.7 x 18.8 x 7.8 cm
Collection of Mississippi Museum of Art
Gift of Sam Olden
1989.016

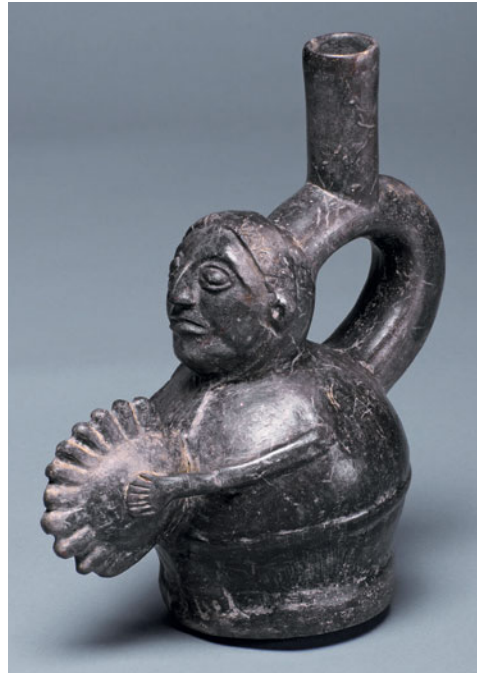
This blackware, double-spouted vessel projects a sense of masculinity because of the protruding double spouts, reminiscent of a male animal's horns. These double spouts are connected with a strap handle. The body, bearing the shape of a curved fish with dorsal or ventral fins, is supported by a pedestal foot decorated with a repeated stair motif. This type of stair motif is ubiquitous in Lambayeque art. The central section of the vessel, outlined with a carved stair decoration, is ornamented with many different representational motifs such as facial features, birds, stars, fish, and a feline profile. The combination of these motifs suggests a Lambayeque conception of the relationship between the human and animal (natural) realms. Although these incised motifs seem sketched in a clumsy manner, they most likely narrate mythologies or symbolize Lambayeque religious ideology.

CHIMÚ CULTURE

(1100–1550 CE)

The Chimú culture was centered in the Moche River Valley and flourished between approximately 1100 and 1150 CE, before the Inca conquered northern Peru around the fifteenth century. The capital of this famous civilization was Chan Chan, an adobe-brick city dominating an area of more than twenty square kilometers. Remarkably, this city existed until quite recently, but most areas have now been destroyed because of the effects of El Niño. Fortunately, beautiful and extravagant Chimú adobe structures are still visible in the surviving central urban area of Chan Chan city, decorated with various mythical creatures and intricate geometric designs. Based on the organization of Chan Chan, it is obvious that Chimú society was built upon hierarchical stratifications with strong imperial authority and a centralized kingdom.

Because of the size of the Chimú kingdom and the power that they developed during the Late Intermediate Period, Chimú potters became more productive and industrialized than craftsmen of previous cultures. Chimú potters seemed to prefer using practical techniques for mass production of ceramics, including mold-making and monochromatic coloring from a reduction atmosphere firing technique. One of the most distinctive designs among Chimú ceramics is the decoration of the stirrup spout with a tiny bird, monkey, or feline appliqué at the joint between the spout and the arched handle.



Standing Man Holding a Spondylus Shell

Northern Coast, Chimú
Late Intermediate Period
1100–1550 CE
Ceramic

19.3 x 10.5 x 18.6 cm
Collection of Mississippi Museum of Art
Gift of Sam Olden
1989.018

This black-colored, stirrup-spouted ceramic vessel depicts a man holding a *spondylus* shell. This Chimú vessel is evidence of a long tradition of stirrup-spouted designs on the northern coast, starting with the Cupisnique culture around the eleventh century BCE. The figure is wearing a simple covered headdress with another layer of headband decorated with zigzag motifs. He is holding a seashell with many thorns on its edge, perhaps representing the sharp thorns commonly found on *spondylus* shells. Based on the way he is holding the shell, it seems that he is presenting this intricate seashell as an offering to someone.

The symbolism of the *spondylus* shell varies because of its bloody red color and extremely sharp thorns on the surface. The particular species of *spondylus* shell shown here inhabits only the warm southern Ecuadorian coast, so it would have had to have been imported, making it expensive and rare. People of high social rank, including noblemen, warriors, priests, and royalty, could use these precious *spondylus* shells to create ornaments like necklaces, pectoral paraphernalia, or bracelets. In general, the shell is also associated with bloodletting sacrifice and the female vagina because of its shape and bloody color. These symbolisms related to the *spondylus* shell have been employed in ancient Andean artifacts since the eras of the Cupisnique and Chavín cultures.

**Anthropomorphic
Seated Figure with
Captive**

Northern Coast, Chimú
Late Intermediate Period
1100–1550 CE
Ceramic

20.9 x 11.4 x 18.6 cm
Collection of Mississippi Museum of Art
Gift of Sam Olden
1994.031

This black-colored, stirrup-spouted ceramic vessel reveals a typical Chimú characteristic in the form of a tiny, appliqué monkey attached between the spout and arched handle. The midnight-black color of this well-polished vessel was created with the reduction atmosphere firing process. A mold was used to form the large anthropomorphic figure, who is seated with bent legs and holds a small person. Both the anthropomorphic figure and the captured person are located atop the square-shaped body. Based on the size of the two figures, the larger, anthropomorphic figure seems to hold more political and religious authority than the smaller human. Its round eyes, triangular ears, curved tail, and elongated muzzle with clear indications of jagged fangs suggest that this anthropomorphic figure bears feline traits. The entity is wearing a half-circular headdress shaped like a *tumi* knife, often used for decapitating the heads of sacrificial victims. This *tumi* knife-shaped headdress, usually made out of either precious metal or exotic colored bird feathers, was worn by a supernatural deity, a priest, or a king involved in a ritual ceremony. The creature holds the human's head tightly and his bent legs trap the smaller, powerless body. This gesture obviously indicates that a sacrifice is being made. The Chimú potter who created this vessel successfully captured a scene of ritual offering.







Salamander (?)

Northern Coast, Chimú
Late Intermediate Period
1100–1550 CE
Ceramic

19.4 x 21.8 x 18.7 cm
Collection of Mississippi Museum of Art
Gift of Sam Olden
1989.021

This blackware, stirrup-spouted vessel bears another example of appliqué ornamentation located at the joint between the spout and arched handle, in this case taking the form of a monkey. The body of this vessel probably depicts some kind of amphibian creature or fish. It may represent a salamander, which has a triangular head, slick elongated body, and pointed tail. However, instead of exhibiting typical salamander legs, this creature has three triangular appendages resembling fins, which cause confusion in distinguishing this creature as a salamander or a catfish.

Either species could be depicted on a Chimú cultural artifact because of its symbolism. The capital city of Chan Chan preserved water for the drought season in a man-made reservoir. It is possible that catfish inhabited this reservoir and became a dietary resource for the Chimú people. On the other hand, salamanders show a unique regenerative ability—when a salamander loses a tail or leg, it can regrow it within a couple of weeks. This ability of regeneration was probably associated with notions of fertility and fecundity. Because both catfish and salamanders might have possessed important symbolism for the Chimú people, this vessel could be seen as depicting either one.

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